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ABSTRACT

Perspectives on working with alumni boards are presented in papers presented at a 1980 conference sponsored by the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education. Papers and authors are as follows: "Your Alumni: An Untapped Resource," Robert G. Forman; "Involving your Alumni in the Total Alumni Program," Douglas Wilson; "How the Board Can Put Alumni Talent to Work for You," Celia O. Goodale; "The Role of the Alumni Board," Alfred M. Hallenbeck; "How the Alumni Board Relates to Professional Staff;" Jack Kinney; "What the Alumni Executive Expects of Volunteers," Jack Kinney; "What the Volunteer Expects of the Staff," Celia O. Goodale; "Building a Better Board," Robert L. Gale; "Getting the Right Person for the Job," Celia O. Goodale; "Involving Other Alumni in Board Activities," Alfred M. Hallenbeck; "How to Educate and Motivate Your Alumni Board," Douglas Wilson; "Developing a Self-Evaluation Program for Alumni Board Members," Alan R. Shark; and "Recognizing and Rewarding Your Board," Douglas Wilson. The important role that alumni professionals can undertake in such areas as providing advice concerning admission and graduation requirements, curriculum development, and the search for university officials; helping in student recruitment; and contributing to library and art activities is addressed. Other important areas that can involve alumni include: fund-raising, public relations, legislative or governmental relations at all levels, career services, and continuing education. Attention is also directed to organizing the alumni board's structure, enlisting the right people, orienting and involving new board members, developing leadership, and dealing with noncontributors. A sample Alumni Board Evaluation questionnaire is appended. (SW)

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How to Work Effectively with Alumni Boards

Edited by Patricia L. Alberger

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How to Work Effectively with Alumni Boards

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INTRODUCTION

The people who serve on alumni boards can be among the most helpful, most committed, and most influential volunteers an institution has. If you work effectively with these volunteers, their talents can be a major asset for your institution. If not, you will waste an important resource.

To benefit from the insights and support of alumni board volunteers, policy-makers at educational institutions must understand the role of an alumni board, how to select the right people for the board, how to educate and motivate them, how to encourage productive relationships between volunteers and the professional alumni staff, and how to reward volunteers for their service.

Because he wanted to help CASE members make the most of alumni board talent, Richard Emerson, then vice president for alumni administration at CASE, masterminded CASE's first conference on Working with Alumni Boards. CASE thanks him for being the prime mover behind what has turned out to be a regular and popular CASE conference offering. It was Emerson, too, who envisioned a CASE handbook on this important topic.

CASE also expresses gratitude to Robert Gale, President of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, who has collaborated with CASE on these successful meetings and who has served on the faculty.

Robert G. Forman, Executive Director, University of Michigan Alumni Association, has provided continuing leadership in staging the Working with Alumni Boards meetings and was the keynote speaker for the conference of February, 1980. This handbook is based on the presentations given at that conference.

CASE offers this handbook with the hope that professionals and volunteers alike will gain a better understanding of the special contributions alumni boards can make to the institutions they serve.

John R. Hall
Vice President, CASE

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YOUR ALUMNI: AN UNTAPPED RESOURCE

Robert G. Forman
Executive Director
University of Michigan Alumni Association

Oliver Wendall Holmes once said that it is required of man that he share the passion and the action of his age, or his time, at peril of being judged that he may not have lived at all.

In a sense, that describes the volunteer movement in our country. It is filled with millions of men and women who are trying to share the passion and action of their times because they do not want it said that they did not live at all.

If you look at everything that makes this country of ours move, if you look at our political parties, community agencies, the church, the service clubs, you will find they are moved by men and women who are trying somehow to share the passion and the action of their moment on this earth. They are moved largely by millions of people represented by alumni administrators and board members. These groups are moved by people who have had the opportunities and the blessings of a college education.

They are moved by people who are willing to serve society against some considerable risk. These people are the achievers of our society and they are represented by volunteer alumni board members and alumni professionals. As for the professionals, I know of no field of endeavor that requires more volunteer action from the people who are paid than does the field of alumni relations. No one in this business has ever worked a 40-hour week. Everything you do beyond that, in my judgment, constitutes some kind of volunteer service above and beyond the call of duty.

Among the millions of college alumni in this country there is a great reservoir that is clearly untapped. This amazes me because they do move such vital parts of our society. Why are they untapped?

We spend a great deal of money trying to recruit volunteers. We spend a great deal of our time and resources catering to our volunteers. We develop very sophisticated ways to communicate with our volunteers. But in the final analysis, we fail, largely because once we get their attention, we are not sure what we want them to do and what we expect of them.

I'm reminded of the time the House of Commons applauded the fact that Great Britain had laid a cable to Africa. When it

finally quieted down, Winston Churchill went to the rostrum and said, "Wonderful, wonderful. We now have a cable to Africa. What is it that we wish to say to the Africans?"

We nurture and marshall our volunteers, and we rally them to the cause. But we seldom are able to articulate just what the cause is all about and what we want our volunteers to do.

We underutilize volunteers. We bring them to the fold and give them meaningless tasks to do. We share with them a kind of partnership frequently involving what I would call trivia. We ask the business woman to record the minutes of a meeting. We ask a banker to read a financial report that we have written.

We fail to use alumni, I think, in the true sense of service. We don't allow them to share in the actions and passion of their time.

Part of the reason is that we ourselves don't understand what we really are trying to do and what our purposes are.

For example, if I were to ask you to give me two or three priorities of the 1980s that are facing higher education, what would you tell me?

You would undoubtedly tell me that we are concerned about problems of declining enrollments. You would tell me that we are concerned about the escalation of costs. You would tell me that we are concerned about apathy, that the public doesn't understand our mission, our students cannot get jobs, and we lack vital support from both the public and private sector.

I don't think those are necessarily the priorities of the 1980s. I think the priorities of the 80s should center around some other concerns. These concerns reflect, in part, some of the problems that we had in the latter part of the 1960s.

For example, at Michigan State University last year there was a demonstration against our possible military intervention in Iran. On my campus there was a demonstration against registration for the military draft. At Harvard there was a similar demonstration.

There are people in the university community who are as dead set against our involvement in the Middle East as they were against our involvement in Vietnam.

This is a nation whose foreign policy is often dictated, not by some uniformity of opinion we all share, but by some very

peculiar public relations instruments. We are facing a time in the history of the United States where a unanimity of expression and feeling is scant. We have some very serious questions.

We have to ask ourselves, for example: Are we in the 1980s going to be the conscience of the rest of the world? Are we going to be the protector of the rest of the world, or the free world?

Can we learn to understand and deal with the aspirations of Third World nations? Can we find a means of communicating with people whose nationalistic aspirations are the same kind of fundamental premises that we started our own American Revolution with?

These are pretty tough questions. And I ask you: Where do you think the testing grounds of these concerns will be? They will be on university campuses. They always are on university campuses because educated people deal with these kinds of problems.

Add to that the fact that we know we have an unequal distribution of the world's fossil fuels, thereby allowing a country like Iran to be a tail to wag the American dog. If you look at the fact that we are overconsuming the available fossil fuels in the world, that we do not understand the problems of dealing with nuclear energy, that we cannot communicate the right answers, if there are right answers, for nuclear energy, you will realize that the technological solutions to those problems again reside on our university campuses.

I think the democratic system in the United States will be sorely tested in the 1980s by people who are going to bring to our attention their diverse concerns. They are going to do this on the campuses; they are going to expect the answers; and they are going to expect to shut things down if those answers aren't forthcoming.

If those problems are addressed to the university community, who answers them? Are faculties geared to provide the answers to the basic question of where American society is going in terms of its responsibilities internationally? I think not.

I think that is an unfair burden on academicians because they live largely in an environment that does not necessarily understand the realities of the real world--call it the Ivory Tower, call it the fact that they work almost exclusively with minds and people who are similar to theirs.

I suggest that one group on university campuses that has a foot both in the real world and in the academic world is our alumni, those men and women who have benefitted by the educational system. These men and women are trying to make a living out in the real world, have children who are of the age to be drafted, are concerned about what we do and how we go about doing it, are the volunteer leaders and board members of the alumni associations. They represent a quality and a viewpoint; without them a university, in my judgment, cannot survive.

Much of the wisdom and the knowledge that will go to university administrators, that will support them, and that will be helpful to them, will be provided by informed and action-oriented alumni volunteers.

I think the mission of the professionals is to marshall those resources and bring them to the university campus in a way that we can use them. That means going out and recruiting bright, responsible, knowledgeable alumni; bringing them to our campus; and giving them something that is meaningful to do.

What are those things that are meaningful to do?

You can make a list of important contributions to university communities. In my judgment, no administrator at a private or public institution should ever be hired without an alumni presence on the search committee. Alumni boards and volunteers insist that this be done. You who are volunteers should be insisting on certain requirements in terms of the performance, caliber, and quality of men and women who lead our institutions.

When a school or college redesigns its curriculum, its admissions requirements, or its graduation requirements, alumni--the people who were the products of the system, the people who can tell you what program during the last 10, 15, 20, or 50 years is working--should be a part of that. I don't think they should run the effort. I think they should be contributors to it.

Every school and college within a university or every department within a college ought to have some type of visiting committee of alumni. And I don't think the committee should operate only for "show and tell."

The alumni professional's job isn't to come in and tell people what a good job he or she is doing. The job is to solicit advice and meaningful help from people who can contribute these assets.

Alumni are not a bunch of neanderthals who make a living out of trying to fire the football coach. And they are far more important than just their money. They are running nations and corporations and companies; they can contribute to the administration of a university.

What is a university? Is it a university president? Is it a faculty? A student body? Board of trustees? It's all of those things, but it's not just one of those things. Included in all of those things are the former students. Every person who has a degree from any institution has a selfish interest in the quality of that institution. No matter when you got that degree, you are still being judged by the quality of the degree today.

There is not a major commission, committee, council, or organization in the university community that cannot be enhanced by the presence of this great resource we call alumni.

Alumni boards and alumni professionals have got to find a way not only to give these people the opportunity to perform, but to help them prepare to perform when they get the opportunity.

That's another part of our problem. We get terribly bright people. We bring them face to face with the university environment. But we do not provide information so that when they get this responsibility, they have some real insight, not in terms of their vantage point as alumni, but in terms of their understanding as to what is going on inside the institution.

To be effective, alumni volunteers must bring their own value judgments from society and from their experience as former students. But they must also experience an educational process now that allows them to know what is happening on the campus so they can make judgments.

That's the responsibility, in my judgment, of the professional staffs of alumni associations.

We should spend part of our time not only in recruiting, not only in facilitating, but in educating alumni as to what is going on, good or bad.

Then we must have some courage in alumni work, some moral fiber, some integrity, and some strength of character to stand behind our judgments.

Not every college or university president is the most gifted man or woman in the world. I have one at my university, but

you may not have one at yours. University presidents ought to be able to learn from alumni.

Alumni are not the adversaries of higher education. They are the supporters. Name me a single university problem and I will give you an alumni solution to it--and a good one.

Is the problem declining enrollment? The best recruiters in the United States are former students. They are not only the best recruiters, with the possible exception of fellow students, they are also a potential market for the university--they can continue their own education. The solution to declining enrollment is not to steal each other's prospective students. The solution is to find more students. We've got to move beyond the traditional age population of freshmen. And the greatest market consists of people who have already been there. They understand what education does to prepare you for a job and what it does for the quality of life.

I don't know how many millions of alumni there are in this country; there are 300,000 of them from my own institution. If only a reasonable percentage of those people would come back for a semester or more to enhance their own education, the enrollment problem would be far less serious than we see it today.

What about the problem of rising costs? The vital margin of every educational institution in this country, the difference between falling on its face and succeeding, is the money raised by alumni. Annual giving, foundation, or corporate support--there isn't a single gift that comes to a university that doesn't come in some way from activated, interested, highly motivated alumni.

Is public understanding a problem? Or legislative support for public institutions? The best salespersons for any university are satisfied former students.

You can go down any list of problems in higher education, and I say there is an alumni answer to that problem. It's not always the best answer; but it's a partial answer.

Our mission is to see how we can use this untapped resource; how we can bring men and women who are educated, who have a sense of responsibility, back to our campuses, and how we can form a meaningful, viable, well-motivated alumni board to measure up to its own responsibilities. We come from different places--small and large. Some have independent alumni associations; some have boards that are not legal entities, that are advisory in nature. But the mission is the same. It's to put alumni talent where it ought to be--back on the campus where it is needed.

INVOLVING YOUR ALUMNI IN THE TOTAL ALUMNI PROGRAM

Douglas Wilson
Executive Director
University of Oregon Foundation

In looking at the subject of involving your alumni in the total alumni program, we should ask ourselves if we have a choice. Of course, the answer is "no." There is no alumni program without alumni involvement. We must approach it from the standpoint of believing that "alumni programs" and "involvement" really are redundant terms. We must have the two; we can't have one without the other.

We must aim alumni involvement and the alumni program at having the alumni help the institution while the institution helps the alumni. Those of you who may be newcomers will be exposed to many debates on the subject of where the emphasis should be. Should the institution spend more time helping the alumni, or should the alumni office spend more time helping the institution? Where do we draw the line?

You really need to go back and look at your organization's constitution, whether it was written 10 or 110 years ago. In almost every instance, the first thing your constitution will say is that the alumni association was established for the benefit of the institution.

The smart thing to do is to work at ways of involving alumni, of helping alumni, in an effort to bring them closer to the institution. Make them a part of the institution. Then have them help with the institution itself, in addition to helping other alumni. This really boils down to a basic fact of alumni work.

In all of this, the alumni administrator is basically the broker between the institution and these thousands of alumni. If we totaled the alumni populations that alumni directors represent, the number would easily be in the millions.

The power of the position that alumni administrators hold--that of being a broker between the alumni and the institution--is significant and unique. There is nothing like it in higher education. It all depends on how you view your position. And a lot of that in turn depends on how you are perceived within the institution and on how your alumni perceive you--either as the chief volunteer or as the administrator.

In too many cases, alumni administrators are afraid to exercise their legitimate power. I don't mean raw power or

negative power; perhaps influence is a kinder word than power. Until they do use their influence, the position and the program simply will not have the character it should have. This colors everything within the program and within the institution.

Let's look at the rationale for alumni involvement. First of all, it's an American tradition. There is nothing like it in the rest of the world. You can go to institutions in Europe, South America, Asia, and elsewhere, and you will not find anything that comes close to the alumni involvement in higher education represented by the United States.

I think the Japanese, for instance, could have incredible alumni programs, and I think some of them are beginning to get involved in that effort. I would like to be an alumni director at a Japanese institution. If a country's workers sing the company alma mater every morning before going to work, you can imagine what they would do in terms of relating to a university.

Secondly, show me a college or a university with a strong alumni program, and I'll show you a strong college or university. I can do that almost without fail. Now, the question is, which came first? Did the strong alumni program help bring about a strong university? Or was it a good college or university that did its job right and in turn produced loyal alumni?

The fact is that strong alumni programs and strong institutions go hand in hand. There are probably a few exceptions.

In addition, alumni are the conscience of an institution. Faculty come and go; students come and go; staff members come and go. But the alumni body is there for years. People are alumni generally 10 or 15 times longer than they were students.

Alumni represent the largest number of people most intimately associated with the institution, whether it is a large one with 300,000 alumni, or a smaller one with 20,000.

Alumni identification is a lifetime identification. When a person dies, what does the newspaper obituary say? It lists the person's name, address, occupation, a few other things, and where the person went to school. It's that important.

People cannot change where they went to school. They are either constantly proud of, or maybe embarrassed by, the actions of their institutions today. So alumni have a stake

in their institutions, and we have a stake in representing alumni interests.

Here's a tough question: Why is it that we listen to a 19-year-old sophomore as if he or she had incredible wisdom and we don't do the same with a 45-year-old or a 50-year-old alumnus? Institutions of higher education spend so much time and money educating young people and then later turn around and don't listen to them. I think this is changing, and there will be more time devoted to listening to people who have been educated, who have gone out and acquired practical experience.

What are the keys to alumni involvement?

The keys to involvement revolve around looking at your institution, not necessarily other institutions, and deciding what is important. Then you should gear your alumni program to help meet those needs.

Faculty will never think that an alumni program is important until it does something for the faculty. Administrators will never think that an alumni program is very important until it helps them with some of their problems. So I think it's wise to look at their problems and their needs and gear an alumni program to help meet those needs.

In the process, you will involve alumni in the neediest, most important aspects of higher education and what it is all about. That makes alumni happy. It makes you a very important person because you are the broker, as I mentioned before, and the people on the other end are the recipients of the interest and dedication. That makes them very happy, and it makes them think the program is smart.

In student recruiting, there are several ways you can organize alumni to help. They can help through an alumni scholarship program. They can find top people, interview, help select, and motivate them to come to your institution.

Alumni can become involved in all kinds of student activities, even the development of the faculty itself. How many of you know where the faculty are traveling to conferences in the next three months? How many of you have lined up some opportunities for them to meet with alumni at a small luncheon or other event? It doesn't have to be a full-scale evening program.

Your outreach program through your clubs in every major city throughout the country is crucial.

Athletics is an obvious area for alumni involvement. There are other areas of importance, such as the library and the art museum, that involve hundreds of enthusiastic alumni.

In fact, we ought to gear every program so that if there is no alumni involvement, it will fail. And if that fails, of course, then we fail. Then we really put ourselves on the line, but it sure keeps us sharp.

Finally, we should work toward bringing us all together in the concept of the alumni family. That's a hard thing to achieve, and it's harder with a larger institution. But that achievement indicates the program is well organized, useful, and enlightened, and that the alumni are motivated.

The key to achieving our objectives is to have a program that is supportive whenever possible because, frankly, nobody wants an alumni program that is sitting out on the fringes taking cheap shots at the institution.

HOW THE BOARD CAN PUT ALUMNI TALENT TO WORK FOR YOU

Celia O. Goodale
Former Executive Director
Mount Holyoke College Alumnae Association

"Men and women have to believe it really makes a difference whether they do well or badly; they have to care. They have to believe that their efforts as individuals will mean something for the whole organization and will be recognized by the whole organization." Those are John Gardner's words in his book on self renewal.

Only then will alumni become effectively involved. Think for a moment about the total program we want to involve alumni in. What comes to mind most readily are clubs, reunions, trips, products, conferences, and so forth. We need to do them.

We are also in business to serve the alumni because we know that by doing that, they will better serve the institution. However, there shouldn't be a single project or program that is planned solely to serve alumni because we know that our ultimate goal is to serve the interests of the institution. As we plan a program, directly or indirectly our goal is the institution.

What about the role of the board in involving alumni in this total program? It can set policy, plan, provide for resources (personnel, finance), implement, and evaluate.

Whether your board is advisory, policy-making, or even operational, it's responsible for the alumni program in the name of the alumni association and in some cases in the name of the institution. We have to think about that. There is nothing that we do, good or bad, that doesn't in some way affect our institution.

We will take it as a given that the board of directors is made up of knowledgeable, committed leaders. We will also assume the board is responsible for overseeing its efforts to inform itself, the institution, and the alumni of its objectives, the resources to reach these objectives, how they can be carried out, and what the opportunities are for the involvement of alumni.

What turns on one graduate won't touch another one. We have to offer such a variety of activities that we can involve as many alumni as possible in the total program.

There are six activities that I think are crucial to the strength of the institution. I'm not saying these are the

only ones by any means. But it seems to me that these areas deserve board-level participation and alumni involvement, through whatever means the institution and the board feel are most effective.

The first is student recruitment. I know there are still some alumni associations that are not involved in student recruitment, and I fail to understand why they are not. It seems to those of us who have been in this business for awhile that alumni involvement in student recruitment is crucial to the quality and survival of the institution.

We are beyond the point of lamenting that there are not going to be enough students to attend our institutions in the 80s. Let's not talk about that anymore. These youngsters have been born. We know their numbers. We are watching the shifts in population and so forth.

Let's concentrate on student recruitment. It deserves board-level attention. There should be, I maintain, a board member responsible for being the personal liaison with the admissions office or other office handling student recruitment.

The board member could chair a committee that organizes alumni to support the recruitment effort and perhaps reviews admissions literature.

There is nothing like having a view from the field to see how the things planned on campus work out in the field. There is nothing like having an alumni committee that can respond, as we cannot, from that viewpoint.

This board person, the committee, if there is one, and those hundreds of volunteers organized in the student recruitment effort should work directly with the admissions office.

We should not complicate matters by setting up a parallel operation. We should do nothing on our own or at cross purposes with the institution. We should work with the institution as part of the team.

Fund raising is another area that traditionally involves alumni. In fact, the annual fund and specifically the class agent system grew out of our alumni offices many years ago. We who worked with classes knew what could be done.

Again, there could be a board-level working committee to review the annual fund's promotion, publications, and so forth. The committee could be an operating or a policy-making body. At Mount Holyoke, the board committee is a policy-making body. We have volunteers making policy on annual fund raising and college staff members carrying out

the policies. This is unusual, but it works for us. Some of us have gone well beyond the traditional volunteer involvement in the annual fund effort. Our board member responsible for the annual fund works directly with our development office, not at cross purposes.

A third area for alumni involvement is public relations. This is not as usual an area of involvement for Mount Holyoke alumnae. We have a new board position and that member is a PR liaison. The groundwork for this was carefully established. It took a long time, but has finally been worked out.

The visibility of our institutions in communities across the land is of crucial importance. Everybody is fighting for attention. That attention says one institution stands for one thing or another, and it attracts parents and students to learn about our institutions.

The PR effort is crucial, and board-level attention to it is important. The institution will find additional strength for its PR effort by working with appropriate alumni. Our board PR position is a liaison position that works directly with the PR office. In the case of Mount Holyoke, the effort involves setting up a network of particularly knowledgeable people, some of whom have influence with the media in their communities. And it's growing.

Continuing education is not a new area of alumni involvement. But if I asked each alumni administrator for a definition of continuing education I probably would get slightly different answers. Continuing education is defined as everything from hour-long programs and reunions to programs in which adults return to school to earn degrees. It's an ill-defined area. When I speak of continuing education, I'm talking about academic offerings that the institution or the alumni association makes available to alumni throughout their lives.

At a District I conference, I heard a speaker on marketing who said he was very puzzled about the way we act in higher education sometimes. He said the institution sells itself to students, but once they become graduates, the institution crosses them off the list as far as continuing education is concerned. No business would ever do that. If you sell soap once, you are going to sell soap the rest of your life to the same customers. The same approach should be true for continuing education.

At most institutions we have not really exploited the academic thread that we all have in common. So, continuing education can be an enormous area of operation for an alumni board. Sometimes the institution does it alone. Sometimes the association does it without working with the

institution. I believe continuing education is worthy of board-level operation and attention.

Another area of involvement is legislative or governmental relations at the local, state, or national level.

This is an area that we should follow closely in the 80s, if we haven't already been doing so. We are all aware of the increasing encroachment of the government into the operations of our institutions.

Alumni can be a tremendous help in government relations, if the effort is carefully set up and the foundation is solidly laid. Whether we ask alumni to write letters that will be carried into a committee hearing, or whether we ask alumni who are themselves influential or who know the influential leaders to work on our behalf, we need to get alumni involved in the interests of the institution.

We've had some false starts at Mount Holyoke. Sometimes we move rather slowly. We finally did get involved in a letter-writing campaign on behalf of the institution. But, to my horror, I discovered that nobody clued in the computer office. So when the mailing went out over the president's signature, we received a number of non-deliverable returns because the computer office had addressed letters to the deceased in Massachusetts. I was told that I had to make a special request if I didn't want them included. I asked, "Well, how can you address dead people?" Of course, as those in fund raising know, there are reasons why you keep certain names on your mailing lists. They may have given gifts in the year in which they died, and so forth.

However, we didn't gain PR benefits by doing such a thing. It's important to keep informed the offices that don't have a direct relationship to a project, but that certainly can affect its success.

Career services is another important area. This may or may not be an area of board involvement; it depends on how your institution sees it.

There has always been counseling of undergraduates for jobs and careers. In the case of men, I suspect that the "old boy's network" has been going on for a long time and may or may not be formally set up as an institutional program. In the case of women, career services is something new. I hate to call it the "old girl's network," but for lack of another term, that's what we are still calling it.

At Mount Holyoke, our career services program is very helpful. We started out with alumnae who wanted to help

undergraduates and then involved alumnae who wanted to help other alumnae. It's another way of involving alumni in the institution. Sometimes it benefits the alumni themselves.

When you start touching on careers, it's really an advertisement for the institution. The institution is misguided, I think, if it does not want to involve what some people consider its product, the alumni. Graduates have come out of an institution and stand for one thing or another. This is usually reflected in how they choose to live their lives and especially in their careers.

In 1974, it was said there were more than 17 million alumni, not just people who hold degrees, but those who have attended our institutions. If it was over 17 million seven years ago, think what the power of alumni could be today in this country on behalf of our institutions, based on the way in which our institutions and our associations, under the board's leadership, involve them.

Bob Forman has said that we should be putting alumni talent to work. I underline those words, to work. The institution and the board of directors are responsible for providing the direction, the framework, in which alumni will be involved.

Q. How does the PR position on the board relate to the rest of the university?

A. It wasn't easy getting it started. Our idea was to make our institution more visible in the community, and we were aware that we were fighting with every other institution for newspaper space. When I talked with the director of public relations, and we are on very good terms, her reaction was, "No, we don't need board involvement. It's going to be more work for me."

It took us a considerable period of time to work this out, and we listened a great deal to what she wanted. She started talking about her needs. We started explaining how we could help fill them. Our board member for PR spent the first six months doing two things. One, she made herself known to practically every office on campus. She is a young graduate, class of '71. She comes to campus at some expense to herself. She is getting known in the offices, and she is asking people various questions about how their operations affect the college, and so forth. It is a very low key approach, and it is working very well.

She also is working to get to know every member of the board and every person who chairs a committee or a project. We all know that everyone who has the responsibility for something is in essence a PR person. She is focusing on that. She

attends meetings and alerts the chair ahead of time that she would like to come. She points out the PR implications of some of their decisions. We are really on the ground floor with this, but we know that we are going in the right direction.

Q. Should student concerns be an aspect of an alumni board's involvement?

A. Absolutely. It took me quite awhile to sell this idea. People kept wanting to know why I spent my time with undergraduates, and I said, "Because tomorrow they are our alumni."

Actually, the board member who is the PR liaison stood in my doorway once and said, "You all on the board talk a lot about involving young alumni, but you don't give us visibility. We are not going to know that we can do anything."

So when the PR position was created and we asked board members for suggestions, I put her name in. She turned right around and agreed to take the responsibility, and she is excellent.

We need to get to these people while they are still on our campuses. We all know that we are dealing with alumni who have multiple alma maters. Who is going to get their loyalty? We have a very popular reunion for those who have only masters' degrees from our institution. They started out with a class agent seven years ago and started raising money. They can relate better to our small institution than they can to their larger undergraduate institutions. Whatever the reason, we are happy to have them. But we need to get to know them from the day they enter our institutions.

THE ROLE OF THE ALUMNI BOARD

Alfred M. Hallenbeck
Past President
National Alumni Association of Syracuse University
Trustee
Syracuse University
Rochester Institute of Technology
Monroe Community College

When we are dealing with a volunteer board, whether it is the board of an alumni association, an art gallery, or a hospital, some fundamental principles apply. We think ours is a unique activity. There is no doubt about that. But the principles of management are substantially the same.

It bears repeating that the board is a policy-making body of the organization. Certainly, when you deal with the fluidity of board membership, as we do in alumni activities, this needs to be said again and again.

The formula I like to use in my analysis of a volunteer board's role in any institution is "P square, plus P, plus P."

"P square" is policy establishment and policy evaluation. The second P is participation. The third is president, meaning that in some institutions, the responsibility of selecting the president or executive director, or ratifying or approving the selection is the responsibility of the board.

Now, where do you draw the line between policy and implementation? As has already been suggested, this is a very fuzzy line. But when you sit back and think of objectives, goal statements, programs, and projects, these are the traditional characteristics of policy.

Implementation--how to do it, who could do it, when to do it, where to do it--is the realm of the professionals, the staff members and the administrators.

We are certainly going to have alumni reunions. But who plans the menu, where each class meets, and so on? All of that is really a part of administration. I know I can get into arguments, and I'm treading on thin ice when I say this, but the volunteers have to acknowledge that they must retreat from the front lines and get back to the policy-making function. Certainly, the hospital board member isn't going to go down to the operating room and determine whether it is clean, orderly, and being run correctly.

Volunteers must remember and reiterate this fundamental principle of organization. It really is no different than the corporate and industrial model in which many of us operate daily. We seem to forget when we move from our business and professional lives into our volunteer lives that our role is the establishment and evaluation of policy; implementation is best left to the staff.

Participation on the part of the volunteer is crucial. I don't believe in the honorary type of board member. I don't think it is fair to the board member or to the institution.

If you want me to be a board member, you should want me to participate in some way. And if I say yes, that carries with it the commitment to participate. The board member must agree to participate in activities, to be there when needed, to help in the day-to-day activities of the organization.

The concept I want to leave with you is the commitment that the board members make to devote time and attention to the affairs and activities of the association, and to assure that the purposes and objectives of the association are carried out.

To do that, the board member must be kept informed and up-to-date concerning the activities of the organization.

This is hard to do--effectively! We hear comments about the reams of material that we get across our desks and in our mailboxes almost daily. It is the responsibility of the leadership of the board, professional and volunteer, to evaluate the means by which you keep board members informed.

You should use the various media on the campus--the student newspaper, the administration's weekly or periodic news sheet, or other newsletters and publications. You should have activities that bring board members to the campus, work sessions that have nothing to do with board activity but have something to do with the activity of the institution.

Exposing board members to the academic, social, and student life, to the totality of the college constituency, is an important aspect of keeping them informed in a timely manner about the institution and the activities of the alumni association.

As I said, the other P stands for president. It relates to the responsibility of selecting, approving, and ratifying the executive director or president of the association, whatever your chief administrative officer is. That responsibility, of course, varies among institutions and associations.

I also want to emphasize the manner in which you perceive the relationship between the board and the professional staff.

I often use two equilateral triangles that touch at their apexes to illustrate how I see the policy-making and the implementation functions coming together. One triangle represents the volunteer board with the chairperson at the apex. The second triangle represents the professional staff, and the executive director is at the apex of this group. The two triangles meet in the person of the chair and the executive director. Action and information flow through these points of contact.

This is not to say that a board member must go through that particular point to approach staff, or vice versa. It suggests that it is crucial that the staff director and the chief volunteer stay in constant contact and that they know what is transpiring among staff and board members so that neither is left out, neither is fooled or kept in the dark. When a board member starts bothering the director about football tickets, a trip on the Danube, or university merchandise, or gets unruly and exceeds the boundaries of board responsibility, then the director ought to tell me as the chief volunteer about the problem. It is my responsibility to go to the board member and straighten out that person. I don't want the director to have his or her job jeopardized or have a problem dealing with a board member. Handling that situation is my responsibility as the chief volunteer. There are a lot of ways that this can be handled.

I repeat that I'm not suggesting that board members can't talk to staff members, or vice versa. They do, they should, and they can very easily. But the chief volunteer should know what's going on. When it comes time to blow the whistle, the chief volunteer is the key point in determining who is going to blow the whistle on whom.

The board is responsible for the property, management, and affairs of the alumni association, either by legal fiduciary responsibility or by delegated authority. The board acts as a board, not as a loose confederation of individuals with personal ideas and interests. The board works through its committees--an organized structure established by written bylaws that are evaluated and revised from time to time. When was the last time you revised your bylaws or even looked at them?

The board's responsibility is not only the establishment of policy, but the periodic review of policy, which is just as important as establishment. Did we do it right? Does it make sense? Are we spending too much money for this activity that nobody is participating in? Why aren't people participating?

The key principles are board participation--being there when you are needed, giving your time, and making your contribution in a positive manner--, being informed, knowing your role in this matrix, and playing it responsibly without interfering in the management of the activity or association.

Q. Are dues, as opposed to contributions, tax deductible?

A. Generally they are not. Dues are considered nontaxable or nondeductible items. But tax law, like policy and administration, is not black and white. There are certain aspects of what some people call dues and how much of the dues goes to the support of the organization. You should talk to your lawyer about this.

HOW THE ALUMNI BOARD RELATES TO PROFESSIONAL STAFF

Jack Kinney
President
Michigan State University Alumni Association

If you've served on boards, and you reflect on those experiences, you see how they could have been much more rewarding, much more effective, had there been more board efficiency and management.

That's a two-way street--effectiveness is the result of the volunteers' service and the efficiency of the board leadership and management.

The role of the professional staff person puzzles us sometimes. We have these great alumni volunteers who are going to give time and talent. How are we going to use them effectively? What is your role?

If you become too involved, is that meddling? If you sit back and believe all these great things the staff is telling you, are you just a weak sister?

To help answer those questions, let's first look at the reporting lines of responsibilities with regard to the professional staff executive. We all serve in a variety of organizational structures. There is no sacred or perfect one. We must be aware of the variety of structures.

In some situations professional staff people report administratively to a vice president for university relations and development, the president of a university or college, and at the same time have an alumni or development board, or even a foundation board.

We then have corporations, associations, or foundations separately incorporated with a board of directors with clear fiduciary responsibilities. Normally, the professional staff executive in those instances serves at the pleasure of that board, but with dotted lines obviously to the university administration.

Then we have situations of dual reporting. Probably more of us than would like are in that situation. I'm not very enthused about dual reporting. I've had staff members who were dually responsible to me and to another individual. I've been caught in situations in which it was not clear whom I was to report to, in terms of boards and administrations. So I want to emphasize that those reporting lines of responsibility must be made clear.

One of the things that can help is a job description for the professional staff executive. I feel it's mandatory that there be a job description not only for the professional staff executive, but for all of the professional positions in your office.

I think you are going to see the term "contract" used more and more on campuses. We've seen it a lot in athletics. I think you will see it particularly with foundations and associations that are separately incorporated; the professional staff executive will be under contract.

When we talk about professional staff executives working with a board, we must spell out clearly that person's management responsibilities. I emphasize that professional staff executives must have the responsibility for hiring of staff, and accountability of that staff must be the sole responsibility of the professional staff executive. That's an area that boards should stay out of. Reviewing staff performance is the responsibility of the professional staff executive. Don't lose that.

How should the staff executive relate to board members? First, you should have an orientation program for board members. That's also a responsibility of the board itself and particularly the chairperson of the board. A staff, however, must play a significant role in the orientation of board members. That's not just a board program by itself. The staff must be involved with orientation.

Communication between the professional staff executive and the board members is very important. Obviously the professional staff executive is going to be very much in evidence at formal board meetings, but how about other times?

Most of the communication is, of course, written. The professional staff executive has the duty and responsibility to keep board members informed, and much of this information has to be in writing.

There are a couple of problems with this area. Too many professional staff executives write too little, and don't keep board people informed enough. Or else they flood them with material, and after a time, the board member is reluctant to go to the mailbox because of all the trivia he or she is getting from the professional staff executive. Send only pertinent material.

You also can't overlook face-to-face communication. This is important. Professional staff executives should carry on constant communication with board members face-to-face. If you can't accomplish this geographically, then, obviously,

you do it by phone. Again, the information you pass on should be pertinent.

How about the involvement of board members with members of your staff? A lot of my counterparts are very sensitive about this. They are concerned that staff people may become too close with certain board members and concerned that they may be telling them things they shouldn't know, such as weaknesses in the program. I think you should encourage involvement of staff with board members. If there is a problem in this area, then it has to be a problem with the professionalism of you as the staff executive and/or your staff. If you have to set some guidelines with regard to the involvement of your staff with your board, do so. But encourage staff involvement.

How about involvement of your board members with your alumni? I think we are very weak in this area. You should encourage this involvement. You can do this through your committee structure.

You should cultivate outside expertise, and this obviously can come from board members. This is an excellent way to involve board members with the alumni body and other key leaders. For example, when you have alumni meetings in areas where there are board members, you should see that the board members make every effort to attend. That's how you can give them visibility. That seems obvious, but in too many instances it is overlooked. I encourage you to involve your board members with your alumni constituency.

Another obvious action that I encourage is to involve your board members with the administration, faculty, and staff of the university. Many times we do a pretty good job of encouraging involvement with the institution's officers. We want to make sure the president, members of the board of trustees or the regents, vice presidents, and deans meet with our alumni board. But then we stop. We need to involve our alumni board people more with the staff and faculty.

You can do this many times in conjunction with board meetings, particularly at a social session to which key faculty should be invited. These are ways to keep campus people informed and involved with your board. Don't tie in only with the president, vice president, and the deans. Move into the faculty ranks.

We should also pay attention to the role of the professional staff executive and the president or chairperson of the alumni board. The bylaws of your organization should outline the duties of a chief elective officer--the president of your association and the chairperson of the board, whatever your structure is.

If you look at many bylaws of alumni organizations around the country, you'll see that the duties laid out for the chief elective officer are pretty constant, with the same language, and are fairly limited. I strongly believe there should be a job description for the chief elective officer. You'd be surprised how many organizations do not have one.

The policies, management, and administration of the board are also important considerations. When we talk about the elective officer and the chief executive officer, we're talking about a very sensitive area. I strongly recommend that you have joint discussions with the elective officer. Your role is constantly changing. The line between policy and administration is not drawn in black and white. It's a very grey area.

I feel strongly that the professional staff executive should be involved with committee assignments. This basically is a responsibility of the board chairperson or president. But the chief staff executive should have input into the committee assignments.

The professional staff executive also has to be very involved with the agenda and the format for the board meeting. This should be worked out jointly with the chief elective officer.

With media relations, it is very important that the chief elective officer and the chief staff executive have their lines set in terms of who is going to be responsible for what. There are certain announcements that should come from the chief elective officer, and the chief staff officer should play a low-profile role. At other times it is probably best that announcements and information come from the professional staff executive. You've got to make sure that there is communication and understanding of who is going to cover these areas. Particularly when you get involved with the press and television, you'd better know who is going to do what because this area can be a keg of dynamite.

The chief staff executive should play a major role with regard to the executive committee of the alumni board. This is normally the key committee of your board. Many organizations have the professional staff executive serve on that committee as an ex-officio member.

The professional staff executive should also play an important role with other committees of the board. Again, the staff executive should be an ex-officio member of those committees.

The professional staff should also be involved with the committees of your board. Professional staff members can be very helpful. You should encourage them to get on certain committees. If you have a publications committee, for example, your editor and associate editor should be involved.

The staff in your office should also be involved and ready to provide information for committees. Encouraging this will be one of your important roles. You've got to make sure that the committees are getting the information they need to carry out their assignments. This is a staff support role. It is extremely important that you allow and encourage your staff to do it, and make sure that it gets done.

Your staff should also have input into committee reports. The board members and committee chairpersons should have your staff people review and finalize committee reports for the board.

In this way, you achieve two-way involvement that's important in building a good board/staff relationship. I want to emphasize that this relationship should not be limited only to professional staff.

We should also consider some pitfalls to be avoided with regard to the staff executive's relations to the alumni board.

One pitfall is being too aloof in relating to the board and its members. There are individuals who feel they were hired to run the organization and that they were hired for their management skills and abilities. They feel that if the board comes in twice a year, they'll report all the great things being done, pass on two or three areas of policy trivia, and send the board members home. But they feel they are running the show.

I'm overstating that example, of course. But we should be careful not to keep the board at a distance. Conversely, another pitfall is to become too involved with board members. There is a fine line to be set. You see examples of individuals who can't make a decision without calling certain board members first.

The professional staff executive was hired for his or her administrative skills and abilities. If you turn to board members too often in making decisions, pretty soon somebody is going to say, "Well, you know, if he or she can't make those decisions without bothering me all the time, we'd better get somebody else who can." So you can get too close.

A potentially touchy situation is board member involvement with certain staff members. If you are going to have your

staff become involved with members on committees and so on, then, obviously, relationships can develop. This is not all bad. But you have to be careful that certain board members or committee chairpersons don't start carrying the banner for a certain segment of your program.

For example, the publications chairperson could start carrying the banner for your editor and get carried away with that program and what he or she wants done.

The board has to reflect the total membership of your alumni organization. Board members can be assigned to work in a few areas, but they also have to be concerned about the big picture.

Another area of concern is board cliques. They are fairly common. We've all had experience with them. Certain members of the board are going to band together; this is natural. The danger comes when certain board members band together and privately determine the goals and directions of your organization.

This can be difficult for the professional staff executive. You can't become involved with board cliques. If you become identified with a certain clique of the board, I don't think you are going to last too long.

Not getting involved with cliques is easier said than done because on many boards there is a certain clique that makes the effort go. But the professional staff executive can't become too involved with cliques, and from your standpoint you've got to discourage them.

We should also be concerned about undue pressures from board members. You've all had experience with this. An example is the board member who calls and wants his or her cousin admitted to the school, even though the student had a poor high school career. The implication is that if you don't get the student admitted, there might be dire consequences to you and your staff. There might also be pressures for additional football tickets, merchandise, discounts on tours, and so on.

You can normally handle these situations. A difficult situation to handle is when board members or individuals want to further their own cause on the board by serving on the nominating committee, or when individuals who would like to be officers want you to spread the word.

You've got to stay away from this type of thing. It's not easy, but you can't have board members pushing you or your professional staff people for certain privileges.

Resisting undue pressures from board members must be done from your standpoint professionally, but this is where your board chairperson has got to come into the picture. If you are getting undue pressure you should alert the chairperson, if necessary, with regard to certain board situations.

To sum up, there are two ideas I want to reiterate. First, the board of directors is the alumni association's most important committee. Second, the difference between policy and administration is not completely black and white.

WHAT THE ALUMNI EXECUTIVE EXPECTS OF VOLUNTEERS

Jack Kinney
President
Michigan State University Alumni Association

What should the professional staff executive expect from alumni boards or alumni volunteers?

The first expectation is commitment. The staff can expect the board person to make a serious commitment to serve the association. Selection to the board is not a reward for past services.

Sometimes we do not handle this expectation very well. We've all been asked to serve on boards. The first thing the individual who approaches you does is tell you how easy it is going to be. He or she says it won't take much time; you won't have to get involved in any committees; it's all right if you miss a meeting.

In this case, there is no commitment. We make it too easy. Then we hear from the person, "Well, I'm busy. You have to understand if I accept this that I'm going to have to miss some meetings. I can't be on any committees. But if you want me under those circumstances, take me."

I suggest that is a poor way to run a railroad. We are doing it too much. If we believe alumni work is important, that the problems in higher education and alumni involvement are important, then the people we ask to serve on alumni boards have got to make a commitment.

You've got to tell members of the nominating committee that when they approach prospective board members, they have to tell them there must be commitment. "We want your time and your talent. We are asking that you reorganize your business and professional structure at this time in order to serve our organization. And if you can't, then don't do it."

This talk of whether serving on a board is going to look good on a person's resume, give him or her visibility in the community, and get this person's picture in the newspaper is ridiculous. People must understand they have to make a commitment. I don't think we've been doing this with alumni boards.

This is not primarily the role of the professional staff. It's more the role of the nominating committee members. They have got to review candidates to see if they will commit the time and the talent it takes to do the job.

Obviously, past service with your organization is a very good indicator of a person's willingness to make a commitment. If alumni have been club presidents, if they were active in the development council, have served on key committees, or as an officer of a college and departmental alumni association, they deserve the opportunity to be elevated to the next step, which is service on your alumni board.

That doesn't mean that at certain times and in serving certain constituencies your nominating committee doesn't need to go outside that realm to seek individuals who should be nominated. Just be sure about their commitment. It's serious; don't let them off the hook easily.

Time is an important factor with regard to commitment. Board members have to give up some time. It takes time to do a good job, to serve voluntarily with an organization. Attending board meetings takes time. Doing serious committee work takes time. It takes time for board members to do their homework on what the organization is all about.

I think there should be a written policy saying that a certain number of unexcused absences by a board member means automatic removal from the board. We see that in bylaws. This probably is one of the most unenforced provisions. I've been on a couple of boards where this provision was enforced, and it quickly gets the attention of the members. It should be enforced.

Again, the nominating committee members should review candidates in terms of their commitment of time. People asked to serve must make a time commitment. Rearranging business, professional, or personal affairs to make that commitment has to be a responsibility of the person being asked to serve your organization. There is nothing worse than having board meetings in which seven of your 20 members don't attend. If you have this kind of absence, there is something wrong with these individuals.

We are being too easy with our board members in terms of getting them involved and getting commitments.

The volunteer should also possess a high level of mental and physical energy. Board members should not be selected during a period of declining health. There are other ways to recognize past contributions.

It's difficult if you have individuals who have health or physical problems. It can have a negative effect on the operation and efficiency of your organization.

It may seem fairly obvious, but if you are going to have an active board, you should stress that mental and physical energy is extremely important with regard to board members. It is extremely important with officers. They've got to be physically able .o serve.

Another important aspect is communication of what the professional staff expects from volunteers and board members. The volunteer must be able to communicate effectively with other board members. It is also important that the volunteer be able to communicate and work effectively with the professional staff, especially the chief executive officer. Your board members should be able to communicate with your alumni and the public. They should be able to communicate orally and in writing.

The volunteer must be able to withstand the criticism that often accompanies leadership. Popularity cannot be more important to an individual than judgment and integrity are. There are many times when your alumni board faces hard questions. You can't have individuals who want to shift with the sand, who want to please all constituencies. They have to have the courage of their convictions. Popularity cannot be more important than judgment and integrity, especially with your officers.

Almost every group has a few individuals who can immobilize the entire organization, if leaders are not willing to move ahead with what they believe is best for the entire group. There are certain cliques within a board that can immobilize it. That's when leaders with judgment and integrity are extremely important.

Since the board speaks for the entire alumni organization, the volunteer cannot be a special pleader for his or her own interests. This does not mean that you ignore the special feelings of a particular constituency. Board members can certainly promote and encourage particular projects and programs for the association, and should be free to do so. But the overall interests of the organization must come first.

We all like to have individuals who generally conform and agree on things. But it's also good for the organization to have some individuals who play the devil's advocate. Too many of our boards are too pat. Individuals may get a little upset with someone who questions something. But we shouldn't always feel that everybody has to go along with the party line, and that everything has to be approved unanimously.

What about the personal conduct of your board members?

The alumni association has no right to meddle in the personal affairs of its members, but volunteers do represent the organization many times at events other than board meetings. Volunteers notorious for their questionable behavior may prove irritating and embarrassing. For example, board members who drink too much may be an embarrassment for you and for the organization. It's unfortunate, but that has become a problem in a number of organizations across the country.

It is incumbent upon the nominating committee to review carefully the background of candidates with regard to personal behavior. Once they are on the board, it's too late.

With regard to spouses, the staff can expect a volunteer whose spouse will be helpful and supportive. The association has the right to expect that spouses will be a source of encouragement, rather than complainers about the demands of board duties.

This seems to be obvious, but we all know how important the role of the spouse is. I've seen board members whose spouses resented the involvement of their husbands or wives. The opposition of a spouse to positions of leadership can render potentially outstanding leaders almost worthless to the group. You can have board members who have all the qualities of leadership, but an uncooperative spouse can kill that potential.

We've also seen instances in which spouses become very active and are a positive force. We should encourage that.

The volunteer should be willing to step down after his or her term of office has expired. The individual should be capable of playing an important role after his or her formal term of service is over. We've all seen individuals who don't want to give up the ship. They want another term; they want to be involved. A lot of times it is an ego trip.

I believe there should be a constitutional limit on length of service. This brings fresh ideas and approaches and preserves stability and continuity. More and more organizations are saying that board members can serve one term; if they want to be reelected or reappointed, they've got to bow out for at least a year. I think that's good. Sometimes it hurts us because the person is someone we don't want to lose. But somehow you have to do without that person on the board.

There are other ways these people can remain involved. I think we are remiss in terms of continued involvement of board members. This should be formalized and not left to chance. So often previous board members and officers are gone and forgotten. Those people can be extremely valuable.

Just because they have left a formal position doesn't mean you shouldn't use their talents again.

Sometimes a person who has served for some time and put his or her heart and soul into a program will want to bow out for awhile and let somebody else carry the ball. After a year or two, most of them will be receptive to getting involved again to a lesser degree than their previous service.

I'll sum up by giving you what I call "Jack's gems." One, staff should remember that more good volunteers are lost because too little is asked of them than because too much is asked of them. It's the old adage: "Use me or lose me."

Number two, professional staff should remember that the volunteer, no matter how involved or committed, needs continuing education about your projects, programs, and objectives. No matter how involved your volunteers are, you should use every opportunity you have to give them more information. This is extremely important.

Comment from member of the audience: I'd like to add something to Jack's reference to spouses. On a woman's board it is very important, when you ask someone to take a top-level commitment, that the spouse understands what this is. But I have not always bargained for the involvement of the spouse. At one point, an association president's husband got so involved with her work on the board that he thought nothing of calling me up to give me some suggestions or to sound me out on something. That just adds another complexity that we may not often recognize in advance.

WHAT THE VOLUNTEER EXPECTS OF THE STAFF

Celia O. Goodale
Former Executive Director
Mount Holyoke College Alumnae Association

Before I served as executive director of the alumnae association, I was a volunteer member of our board for many years. So for now I'm talking as a volunteer about my expectations of the staff. The board relates directly to the executive director, who in turn directs the staff and daily operations.

I'd like to emphasize that the relationship between the chief volunteer officer and the executive director can set the tone for what happens on the board. If there is an understanding between the president of the board and the executive director, if they are on the same wave length, this makes things go much more easily. They maintain a balance of influence between them.

The relationship can serve as a role model for other staff and board member relationships. If staff and volunteers are working at cross purposes, it can devastate the effectiveness of the board. Between the two groups there can be a balance of power that is terribly important to both of them. While the chief volunteer may be designated the leader, and the staff director the manager, they are in essence playing both roles. This is part of that dynamic tension that is so important.

As you think back over the association presidents with whom staff and executive directors have worked, you may find, depending on what that dynamic tension is, that the volunteer truly provides the leadership, or recognizes that some of that leadership comes from the executive director. As a volunteer I expect that I am the person who is the most visible in providing the leadership of that board.

I as a volunteer expect clarity about what the staff and board responsibilities are. They can overlap; this isn't a black and white area. There is a vast gray area, but there still has to be a framework in which we have expectations of each other.

As a volunteer I also expect constant communication. I expect the executive director to keep me informed. I don't want to be put in an embarrassing position because the executive director has not kept me clued in.

We all know what the real lines of communication are. They may be set down on paper, and there may be charts, and so

forth. But there is nothing like the grapevine for real communication. Volunteers don't always understand this.

Another area of expectations concerns the relationship of the board members with the professional staff. It would be very simplistic to say that the board sets a policy and the staff carries it out. The board does set policy. The board does see that it is carried out. But the staff is a very important resource.

I would not dream of conducting a board meeting without having all resources marshalled ahead of time. The board should know that the staff will supply those resources. Board members need staff support.

Evaluation is a shared responsibility. I as a volunteer have something to contribute that I think is important not only to the board, but to the staff. I can bring a perspective from the field to the staff, and I expect the staff to listen because the staff cannot be all over the country. It cannot find out very easily for itself what alumni are thinking, how they are reacting to what is happening on campus, where they think they should work to support the institution. I can do that, and I expect the staff to be open to this contribution that board members can make.

Neither the staff nor the board should dominate. I don't expect the staff to run everything. I don't expect the board to run everything. We are a team.

I expect to have a professional relationship with the staff. I respect what staff members can bring to their jobs, but I expect the staff to recognize me as a bonifide coworker who has a professional attitude toward my job.

I expect the staff to see that the time I have committed is used wisely. I'm not going to tolerate going to a board meeting that is filled with trivia, where we don't make decisions or discuss meaty issues.

I expect guidance in my job. I want to be pushed occasionally. I want to leave campus feeling totally involved in what I'm there for. When I go home, and no matter what my good intentions are, I find that there are other priorities. Whether male or female, a board member usually has a family. I also have a career, and other responsibilities.

So sometimes I need to be pushed.

I expect a staff member to be sensitive to this, to know when to push, and how far to push. It's all part of the support that I expect.

I want training in my job. As I have viewed boards over the years, I've found that training or orientation is often inadequate.

I happen to be on a board where we serve three-year terms. Some boards have 10-year terms. Some terms are only a year. When a term is only one year, and the staff is expected to provide some training for new volunteers every year, we need to question the efficiency of this system.

As a board member, I expect to have an opportunity for growth. I can always learn.

I want some recognition, too. Sometimes I need only a simple "thank you." It means a lot to me to have a staff member say, "Thanks so much for doing that professional job, for running that meeting so well, for being in control." As I mentioned earlier, I want some respect for the contribution I'm making.

What are the joys that I find in my job as a volunteer? Why on earth do I do this?

I welcome the opportunity to work with staff members because I know the staff members are topnotch in their jobs. And I enjoy working in a top-level position for my institution. The reputation of the alumnae association on my campus is a very good one. People on campus know alumnae are around, and they know they play a vital role in the life of the institution, even though they are not physically there.

One of my enjoyments is accruing the training and the experience. Right now, I'm one of those female association presidents who does not work at a paid job in my community. But I'm thinking of it. My children are almost grown. I want to make a substantive contribution somewhere.

Unfortunately, society seems to pay the most notice to those who are paid in dollars. So I'm enjoying the fact that I can accrue experience that will count when I go out to look for a job. As a woman, I am very interested in this area. I know there are over 300 corporations in this country that now accept a resume of volunteer work in lieu of a paid work record. And I appreciate the fact that the staff is willing to help me gain experience that will eventually work to my benefit.

I like meeting once a year with the institution's board of trustees. Of course, it's only for a social hour and dinner, but the trustees think it is important enough that the board spend a couple of hours with them. Before we met we didn't have any faces to put with the names. Now we have met and enjoyed each other socially, and it is going to be a little harder to get into an adversary position because of this.

What are some of the sorrows of my volunteer job? I don't want to work with a staff member who does it all and tells me about it later. That isn't why I took this job. I don't want to work in that type of atmosphere.

I don't want to be embarrassed by being the last to know something. I expect the staff to save me from embarrassing situations. Sometimes, to my sorrow, I have been placed in a very difficult position.

Sometimes more is expected of me than I can reasonably give. I want the staff and others to recognize that I don't wake up every morning thinking of the institution first. I may think of the institution more often than most alumnae, but truly, that isn't my first thought in the morning. It is very frustrating when a volunteer gets called at 8:30 in the morning for an opinion on something that a staff member has been wrestling with for an hour already. I'm in a different time zone, and the staff member has forgotten that. So my husband hasn't left for the office yet, and the kids are milling around, and so forth. I don't want to be expected to give more than I can reasonably give.

Another one of the sorrows involves staff members who rarely share decisions. There are decisions that the staff more appropriately makes than the volunteers and vice versa. It must be clearly reviewed from time to time just what we are about and who is really doing some of the decision-making.

Finally, it's too bad when my talents are not used. I like to share my experience in working with the board with other groups, especially with alumni groups. I don't think the executive director should be out making all the speeches. I think there are things that I can say better as president of the board. I would like that particular talent to be used. My successor may not have that talent, so there is a constant juggling of talents that the president of the board brings to the position.

All in all, I would like the staff to recognize that volunteers and staff together are professionals working as a team for the same objectives.

BUILDING A BETTER BOARD

Robert L. Gale
President
Association of Governing Boards
of Universities and Colleges

I could end this article quickly by simply suggesting that you take the four steps that I recommend in my booklet, "Building a More Effective Board":

1. Decide what you want and need on your board.
2. Establish a search-and-recruit procedure.
3. Establish an orientation procedure.
4. Establish a procedure for terminating service.

Actually, however, it takes planning, hard work, and a little bit of luck to develop an alumni board that performs effectively while respecting its role in the total scheme of the institution's governance. First, the board should recognize that it sets policy and does not get involved in the administration of the alumni association. It must also recognize that only the board of trustees sets the policy for the institution. Obviously, the board of the alumni association should have very good channels of communication to the board of trustees, but final institutional decisions must be made by the trustees.

I would also be naive if I did not mention that alumni associations tend to be fraught with politics. Much of this comes from the history of the association, the degree of autonomy of the alumni association, the personality of the college president--and you can all add your own personality as well. But from here on I will ignore politics and pretend that you can build a better board in the most sensible way possible.

ORGANIZING THE BOARD'S STRUCTURE

It is often easiest to deal with reorganizing the board of an alumni association through a revision of the bylaws. This keeps you from having to take up a number of somewhat controversial items separately. Have the board consider and adopt an entirely new set of bylaws that include all of the changes needed. (The Association of Governing Boards has developed a set of bylaws for a typical private college that might be of some help to you.)

Let's start with the size of the board. You need a large board for diversity, but a small board for manageability. You need a large board to be able to take on the numerous assignments

necessary these days, but you need a small board for cohesiveness as a working unit. When I put all of this together I come up with 25, plus or minus a few.

It is also important to consider carefully the terms of office for alumni board members. While you want maximum turnover to involve as many alumni as possible, you need enough continuity for the board to be able to handle the association's business in an intelligent fashion. I suggest three-year terms, with a third of the board being appointed each year, with a maximum of two terms before a board member must leave. Others prefer two-year terms, with a maximum of two terms. It is also wise to write in a clause in your bylaws saying that after a year off it would be possible to return only the fantastic few for another two terms.

For the sake of building participation and leadership it is also important to rotate the terms of officers. I suggest two-year terms, probably not renewable.

Selection procedures differ, depending upon how the given association has been organized. If possible, the nominating committee of the board should solicit nominations from the entire alumni body. Then, ideally, the nominating committee would recommend names to be added to the board and officers to be elected by the board. The nominating committee could well include some non-board members so that the process does not look as if it is dominated by insiders.

Open elections sound good, but in practice they just don't work. It is expensive to solicit candidates from the entire alumni body. The returns tend to be very small, and invariably a "jock" wins.

One of the best ways to make an alumni board function effectively is to have a solid committee structure. Such committees might include an executive committee, nominating committee, program committee, admissions and marketing committee, career counseling and placement committee, and a development committee.

Some alumni boards now have an academic and student affairs committee. If you organize one, you should handle it with extreme care. Obviously the alumni have worthwhile input to make to the academic program and to student life, but the board should be careful that this committee does not overstep its bounds.

Making the most of alumni board committees can help the board to be a vital and effective body. There are some caveats to keep in mind, however.

My first caution is: Do not let the executive committee set policy. If this committee begins setting policy, the rest

of the board will not be involved. The members will realize they are serving purely as a rubber stamp, and you will lose their involvement. Ideally, the executive committee should handle only routine business between regular board meetings, and it should communicate to other board members all decisions it makes. You can also use the executive committee as a long-range planning committee.

Perhaps the most important committee is the nominating committee. If you have a strong nominating committee, over a period of time you will have a strong board. Put your best people on this committee, work with them, and encourage them to work hard.

The program committee is essential to keep current activities thriving, to come up with new ideas, and to plan future events.

At Carleton College we have great success with our admissions and marketing committee. I was chairman of it when I was on the alumni board. I think in the 1980s it is going to be important to involve our alumni in the whole admissions procedure to seek out the students who are best for our institutions. I don't mean chasing students just so your institution can survive. I mean finding people who can benefit the most by the education your institution offers.

When we were trying to improve our recruiting procedures at Carleton a few years ago, we put together a group of top marketing people who were alumni of the college. They came in as volunteers and gave advice, which was extremely helpful. In addition, Carleton uses a network of some 225 alumni admissions representatives throughout the country.

A career counseling and placement committee can also help your institution. In a soft economy there is a growing need for both kinds of assistance. You can involve hundreds of alumni in this area. They can come to campus and tell what it's like to be a lawyer, for example, and they can help new graduates get situated in their first jobs.

Of course, we already know how vitally important a development committee can be, especially in the 1980s. We know we will need the continuing financial involvement of our alumni if we are to prosper, or perhaps even survive.

I'm a great believer in ad hoc committees that have a definite beginning and end. When a special problem or opportunity comes up, you can often get some previously uninvolved alumni to solve the problem, and then disband the committee.

ENLISTING THE RIGHT PEOPLE

How do we enlist effective board members? There are several considerations.

Number one is the composition of the board. For example, what talents do you need? You probably need a lawyer, someone with marketing experience, someone with public relations experience, and so on. Look carefully at what you need.

What kinds of people do you need? You need people who have interest in your institution, who have the time to give, who are well organized, and who will be available when you need them. I always add that you need people who have a sense of humor. How can you deal with alumni affairs and not have a sense of humor?

You also need diversity, which ought to reflect your own alumni body. You need diversity of age, sex, race, geography, and for some of you, religion. You should consider diversity carefully, but don't try to put together a group that has nothing to do with the composition of your own alumni body.

Too little attention is usually paid to identifying potential new members. How do you identify them? Sometimes we don't take time to do it correctly.

Obviously, we should consider who made gifts to the alumni fund over a period of time, as well as who is involved in local club activities. We should also look at who serves on committees, visits the campus, shows up for homecoming, attends theatrical events, and who is today a parent of a second-generation student who is doing well.

If your institution is in the Midwest and you suddenly realize you need more power in New York, look at the yearbooks of appropriate years. Find out who got written up as being the most active in college. They are the people who will most likely be active later on, and they are good ones to look up.

Most important, you should check your volunteers' references. You would never hire someone for your office without checking his or her references. Yet we often put volunteers on boards without checking with their other boards to see if they participate. Call the chief executives of the other organizations and find out.

Once you've identified your prospects and cultivated them, if necessary, how do you extend the invitation to serve? Pick the best person or perhaps the best team to extend the invitation and, if possible, do it in person. If the prospect lives 500 miles away, you may have to do it through a

telephone conference call involving the president of the alumni association, the chief staff person, if he or she is well known, or maybe even the president of the institution in some cases. You might involve the chairperson of the nominating committee, if you follow my advice and have a strong committee. Approach your prospect in the most powerful way you can. If you go to all the trouble of finding the right person and then only mail that person a letter, he or she will say, "I'm busy."

At the time of the invitation, you should also explain the duties and responsibilities of the position. The prospect has to know what the position entails. If not, he or she may later say, "Nobody told me I had to work."

We use a booklet called "Trustee Responsibilities." We send it to people who are enlisting trustees so they can say, "Here are your basic responsibilities. Here are the special ones for this particular institution."

ORIENTING AND INVOLVING NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Orienting new board members is more important than ever before. I think this is going to be the most exciting and challenging decade in one sense in the history of higher education in this country. You are going to need good people on your board and they have to get to work in a hurry. They can't sit around for the first two or three years of their terms not knowing what is going on.

So we must orient them. I suggest that you orient them on campus, if they are nearby, before the first board meeting. If they are far away, have them come to campus a little early before their first board meeting.

New board members should know about the alumni association and especially about recent board deliberations. Send them materials about the alumni board, such as the bylaws, minutes of recent board meetings, and so on. They also should know more than they probably know about the college. Send appropriate materials, including the college catalog. But do not send them too much material or they won't read anything.

How do you use new directors and get them involved quickly? For one thing, you can put them on a committee right away, preferably an active committee. If you are just beginning some ad hoc activity, put them on that committee. Get them involved. In addition, the president of the alumni association might call them before their first meeting to tell them the agenda for the meeting. You might also use what I call the buddy system. Assign a long-time board member to get the newcomer acclimated.

DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP

How do you develop leadership? Obviously, you move good people up the committee system until they eventually become chairpersons. You can also give them special, ad hoc assignments. You should rotate the terms of officers. Let other people move up and get a taste of responsibility.

Find out how new board members produce. Attempt to involve them in local club activities. Get them into local admissions or fund-raising work.

The president of the institution can make alumni board work very important if he or she shows particular interest and has lunch someday with a volunteer who is on the way up your leadership ladder. Use your chief executive sparingly, however. He or she has more than enough to do. Most chief executives know the importance of developing alumni board leadership. If you use the chief executive selectively, he or she will appreciate it.

DEALING WITH DEADWOOD

Unfortunately, at some time you might have to deal with the problem of deadwood. First of all, be firm on limiting membership to one term, if someone does not produce. Don't reappoint someone because you are afraid you will hurt his or her feelings. Stand by that rule. If it takes you the first term and into the second to find out a person is deadwood, you have the rule, if you have followed my advice, of not letting a person serve again until after he or she has gone off the board for a year. That saves you the embarrassment of telling this person he or she is not being reelected.

I emphasize, however, that you should not have the staff person tell a member of the board that he or she is doing a poor job. That is a responsibility for the alumni leadership, for the volunteer. If you have a strong alumni president, and if that person can handle it properly, he or she can take the board member to lunch and discuss the situation. The alumni president can probably get the member working harder or let that person go off the board. That's where alumni leadership comes in.

THE INACTIVE BOARD

Another potential problem is an inactive board. What can you do?

First, suggest that the board members engage in some self-assessment of their performance. They will get a feel of where they are failing. We've done this with boards of trustees of colleges and universities, and people have literally resigned at the end of the exercise and said, "I'm not doing what I'm supposed to be doing!" If you are lucky, some of your inactive members will do that. Consider using outside catalysts. Get someone from another institution or a national association to come in and lead board members through their self-assessment.

Develop stronger leadership. An effective alumni president can go a long way toward pushing an inactive board into activity. But you need strong leadership overall. Perhaps there could be more involvement of the president of the institution temporarily to get that board moving, to show members the importance of what they ought to be doing.

Perhaps the professional staff can instigate some exciting new program. Do you really have a meaty agenda developed for each board meeting? Sometimes when I look at those agendas I can't blame people who get bored. There was a study done of boards of trustees of colleges and universities in five western states. I believe 74 percent of the agenda items were considered to have no connection to policy.

The president of the association and the top leadership of the staff should develop the agenda together. If you don't have important policy items to discuss, then don't have a board meeting. Sometimes the blame should fall on the professionals and the association president for not inspiring the board to be productive. Don't always put all the blame on the board itself.

Another method of revitalizing a board is to add some exciting new members. Sometimes adding just two effective people can turn the rest of the board around, particularly if you can also get rid of the ones who are holding things down.

THE TOO ACTIVE BOARD

How do you handle the problem of the board that's too active? Again, self-assessment is necessary. Have board members look at themselves, what they are doing, and what they ought to be doing. An outside catalyst can be helpful here, too.

Again, you need a strong alumni president who can control a meeting, who can interrupt the person who is going overboard and suggesting that the board do things it ought not to be

doing. You need someone who can take control and run that meeting.

If you really have trouble, you can organize the moderates on your board very quietly. Put together a strong but moderate nominating committee so that you can get rid of members who are running away with the ball and add some people who want to be active within the proper context.

To summarize, you can handle your problems by doing just what I suggested at the outset: 1) Decide what you need and want on your board; 2) Establish a search and recruit procedure; 3) Establish an orientation procedure; and 4) Establish a procedure for terminating service.

GETTING THE RIGHT PERSON FOR THE JOB

Celia O. Goodale
Former Executive Director
Mount Holyoke College Alumnae Association

If we are going to get the right people for our boards, we need to understand what kinds of people we are addressing ourselves to and for what results.

Why do alumni want to be on boards of directors?

As I saw it as a former staff member, alumni want to be involved in a job worth doing, and they perceive that a board-level position is such a job.

I think alumni accept board positions because they like the challenge. They want to meet their own personal needs, and we ought to find out more about these.

Alumni also want to serve on boards to help meet institutional needs. One of the main reasons is that a graduate feels he or she can influence what is happening at the institution.

We need to understand the reasons and motivations for alumni service on boards.

What qualifications should we seek? Do we want someone who can be managed? We have to consider some of the negative characteristics we may encounter. Aren't we really looking for board members who have a personal set of ethics? Do we think enough about that?

I think we are looking for someone who has a high level of interest in the job, who has enthusiasm, and a sense of commitment.

We are looking for people who have various kinds of experience, especially experience that fits the needs of the job. We want a person who is a proven worker. Obtaining references on prospective board members is very helpful. We don't want a person who is serving simultaneously on five different boards, unless that person is a proven worker in every case.

We want someone with administrative ability, who can exercise leadership, who has knowledge of management skills, and who is good at problem-solving and decision-making.

We want someone who is reliable, credible, and persistent. We especially want someone who can involve others in the work of the alumni association.

My definition of a leader has always included the words, "someone who affects what other people do," whether that person is a club president or board member.

We also want someone who has sensitivity to other people--to the other board members and to the staff. And who has a sense of humor!

It's also important for board members to have some knowledge of the institution's purpose. There are good reasons why we have board members who are not intimately involved, who have not come up through the ranks from clubs, and so forth. But a board member should have some knowledge of and certainly interest in the purpose of the institution.

It isn't enough to know what the association wants to do or what the institution does. Board members need to understand that the institution's activities happen in the broader arena of higher education. Is the board really making a contribution to higher education?

A board member should add something to the balance of the board, through his or her clout or influence, abilities, creativity, or flexibility.

Others have already emphasized how important it is for board members to make a commitment of time. Certainly that is a major qualification we expect a board member to have.

The ability to understand finances is terribly important. Yes, we raise money. But do we understand why we raise it, or what is going to happen to it?

I once took a concentrated course sponsored by the Wharton School of Finance called "Finance and Accounting for Nonprofit Organizations." We went from 8 in the morning until 5 at night. The room was jammed. There were about 55 people there, but only four from higher education. I think some of the people we work with in alumni administration should have been there. We were told not to expect the board of directors to thoroughly understand finance. However, we should expect a qualified board member to understand our budget.

Board members should also have an interest in fund raising and public relations. A board member has to understand that he or she is seen as an extension or an embodiment of the institution.

How do we identify alumni for these top-level jobs? We have a very elaborate system of files and so forth developed by our volunteers. It is an excellent resource. We can afford the operation only because it was set up by volunteers who are not charging dollars for their time.

With our computer setup we do not have high priority access to the information we have stored, so we find it more workable to have alumni keep manually the files related to board nominations.

We publicize board positions. We use our magazine, our committee structure, class structure, clubs, and other avenues to publicize an opening, whether appointive or elective.

We follow that publicity with research, a certain amount of screening, checking references, talking with people, and listening.

Our nominating committee routinely attends alumni council meetings and the like. They know whom they want to talk to, whom they want to listen to, and whom they want to see identified as possible board material.

We send out a letter that says we want you and why. We follow it up with a telephone call. The letter says that we'll be calling the prospective board member in a week or two. We do not believe in making the telephone call out of the blue. We can be turned down just as easily by calling on the telephone with no prior lead-up as we can be turned down by writing only a letter. Our letter also includes the name of the person who presently holds the position and the staff member who works with that person.

Whatever form of communication you use, it has to give a clear sense of what the job is. We have tools for this, such as job descriptions. I think we fail if all we ever send is a job description or an expense policy statement, but we don't say what it is that we are about.

We should also consider policy versus procedure. Policy is rarely what we call policy. We are more apt to be talking about practices or procedures. That isn't policy.

It is not policy, for example, that we must use the quarterly magazine to bring the board nominations to the attention of the alumni. The policy is that alumni have a role in determining who board members should be. The "how" of it is the procedure and that can be changed without legislating.

The nominating committee needs support from the right person when someone is being asked to take a position. That person could be the alumni president, the executive director, or even the president of the institution. Somewhere along the line we may need to call on the right person to give that extra push to the prospective board member, who is trying to understand the sense of the job that he or she is being asked to take.

There are certain pitfalls to avoid in considering prospective board members.

Never decide that somebody is too busy to be asked to take a job. Let that person decide. Often a person who is busy is so well organized that he or she can take on more work.

Once we've decided who is qualified to serve on the board, how do we get that person to say yes? The key to some of this is timing. There is the right time to ask the question, and knowing that time is just a matter of sensitivity.

I talked with various board members recently about why they accepted their positions. They had a variety of answers. One person said he accepted because he believes in the institution.

This answer should prompt us to consider whether alumni know about the institution today, not as it was when they were there, but now. They must know its goals, its values, and so forth.

One board member said, "The board job offered to me came the closest to providing me with a professional opportunity to operate."

"It gave me a chance to accomplish something of substance," said another member.

Another board member said she accepted because board service was exciting and enlightening. She added that the programs the board is involved in have significance on her campus, and she wanted to be a part of it.

Another member said he wanted to be part of the influence that the board of directors has at his institution.

The organization asking for service must be vital and exciting enough to interest good prospects.

INVOLVING OTHER ALUMNI IN BOARD ACTIVITIES

Alfred M. Hallenbeck
Past President
National Alumni Association of Syracuse University
Trustee
Syracuse University
Rochester Institute of Technology
Monroe Community College

Particularly with a large alumni population, you can't limit your total activity to a group as small as an alumni board, which may consist of 25 or 30 people. Complementary assistance through various advisory committees can be very effective.

At one of my alma maters, for example, we have an athletic policy board that consists of athletes and people from all aspects of campus life, present and past. We have a publications board that evaluates the publications that go to alumni and other constituents of the university.

In that institution we have a very active chapel board that involves yet another group. We also have a student life board.

All of these activities are ways of involving both the newcomers and the veterans. We should not limit the involvement of alumni only to service on the alumni board. The board is essential, but its membership is limited in number. That limitation should not impose a limitation on the breadth of your alumni activities.

The word "meaningful" is used a lot in talking about alumni boards. To me that is essential from the perspective of a volunteer. I will not serve on a "rubber stamp" board.

At least in the college and university setting, a great part of the decision-making process involves the institution's president. That is where the decision of how meaningful a board can be may very well rest. It may be a catch 22 situation. It may be the board leading the president, or the president leading the board. But there has to be a fundamental understanding with the president as to what role the alumni are going to play.

Certainly at many colleges and universities there has been a traditional role for alumni. But things change. People come and go. At some emerging, smaller institutions where alumni activities may not be as traditional as they are in others, we have to learn.

I know of college presidents who really don't care about the alumni board. They are perfectly willing to go to club meetings, to go on the fund-raising tour, to lead the football games, and so on. But when it comes to meaningful decisions, they'd rather not involve the alumni board.

I suggest that when volunteers are looking for the opportunity to contribute in the full sense of the word, they should ask: What's the attitude of the president? If the president's attitude does not indicate that he or she is interested in an active alumni board, then isn't it time that the alumni wrestled with that? It really comes down to the question of whether you should have an alumni board.

My personal philosophy is that if I can't make an effective contribution, if the institution is not receiving some positive benefits from my contribution, then I have many other things to do. There are many community activities in which I can make that kind of contribution.

HOW TO EDUCATE AND MOTIVATE YOUR ALUMNI BOARD

Douglas Wilson
Executive Director
University of Oregon Foundation

There is no one way to educate and motivate your alumni board. We all try to find the single approach, the magic wand, to change things. The fact is that it takes a lot of things. They all add up, and that makes the difference.

That reminds me of a story involving an alumnus who returned to his alma mater for his 25th reunion. He was a highly successful individual, worth many millions of dollars. This was quite a surprise to his classmates because they all remembered him in college, and he wasn't too sharp. He was particularly slow in anything having to do with mathematics or business.

His classmates were wondering and shaking their heads, and finally one of them had enough nerve to say, "Herb, some of us have been talking about how you were in school, and we all had a lot of good times together. We never thought that you would make it. But you've obviously done extremely well. How did you do it?"

Herb thought for a minute and said, "It really wasn't too hard. I formed this company. We make widgets, and it costs me about a dollar to make them, and I sell them for $5. You would be surprised how that five percent adds up."

The moral of the story is that in working with your alumni boards, you do a little bit here and a little bit there, and you would be surprised how that five percent adds up.

Before we can educate and motivate our own boards, I think we need to look at our own education and motivation. How much do we really understand and appreciate the role of the board? How comfortable are we working with the board?

We jump right into it so quickly sometimes that we may even jump over step one. Of course, in baseball, if you don't tag first base before reaching second base, you are out. In alumni and development, sometimes if you don't tag first base before going to second base, you could be in trouble as well.

So let's look at why we have an alumni board. If you can't answer that, and if you don't really know, you are going to have trouble educating and motivating your board members.

Let's consider the wrong reasons for having an alumni board. One is that "there has always been one." Frankly, meaningless tradition doesn't amount to anything. The fact that there has always been one will not develop a good board, and it really won't lead to educating and motivating your members.

Another wrong reason is, "The constitution says that we must have one." Somebody some time ago put some words on a piece of paper, it got stamped appropriately, and that makes you legal. But, again, that reason doesn't really guarantee that your board will be a good one, and it doesn't create understanding of what the board is and should be. That's not enough to fall back on.

We also hear that "it looks good" to have a board. That's always nice. All organizations have a board. But, again, so what? If you have a board only because "it looks good," you're wasting time, talent, and energy. Frankly, everyone can see through it. If that's the reason, it's not good enough.

Another reason is, "Well, what else are you going to do with a bunch of nosy alumni?" If that's how you are approaching it, you probably are better off on the faculty. For that matter, if there are others in key administrative positions who look at it that way, then you must educate and motivate them, as well as your staff and the board members themselves.

There are some good reasons for having alumni boards. A lot of it is a question of attitude. How you approach these things can make all the difference in the world. I'll illustrate that with a story.

Years ago there were two shoe manufacturers who sent sales representatives to an underdeveloped country. One salesperson cabled his company and he said, "We are returning on next boat. No business here. Natives don't wear shoes."

The second salesperson wired and said, "Natives don't wear shoes. Send millions of them right away."

That's an example of the differing attitudes that can make a difference in your own motivation.

Actually, the board is what your program is all about. It should be representative of a very large body of individuals, some of whom are more interested and involved than others. The board represents people helping people and helping their alma mater in the process. That's one good reason for having an alumni board.

In fact, the quality of your entire program very likely will be judged by the kinds of people you have on the board and

the way that board functions. That may not be fair. But with all the information being thrown at people today, all the things we are supposed to keep up with, and all the things that we are supposed to do, people increasingly are making snap judgments. They are looking for handles. We like to think we do tremendous research and are very knowledgeable. But if you really analyze it, we tend to look at people, things, and groups and analyze them quickly.

First impressions sometimes become the only impressions. That's unfortunate; we need to deal with it. How you organize your board, the people on it and their motivation may end up representing you and all the other people in the entire institution.

A second good reason for having a board is that its members serve as sounding boards and opinion makers. They can be the extra eyes, ears, mouths, hands, and arms for your staff. That's a very valuable reason for having board members. Could you ever afford to hire what they can and are willing to do for you for practically nothing? That's perhaps the way to look at their contribution. If we had to hire people to cover the ground that a well-organized board can cover in one year, we would go broke. An effective alumni board is really an addition to our program.

The third good reason for having a board is that a responsible alumni board becomes a vehicle of expression for all alumni. If that hasn't developed, somewhere along the way it will. A percolater system begins to develop. People start being identified in their communities as being closely related to the institution, and other alumni turn to them to ask questions. Alumni take their cares, needs, and concerns to these individuals, and they in turn bring them the attention of a staff member, or the board. You then develop a whole system of very sound communications. That's a good reason for having a board. Finally, during and after their service, alumni board members become the core of informed and understanding alumni who are in an excellent position to continue the success of the program. You've spent time with them, you've worked with them, you've brought them along, you've educated them. They know you, you know them, they know more about your program than practically anybody else, given the number of alumni with whom you are dealing. When you graduate them, so to speak, they become the core of that informed, understanding, and sympathetic group.

In fact, there may come a time, as we get into the 1980s, when our programs are going to be challenged, and you may want to call on these folks to come in and help you defend them.

If they have been properly educated and motivated, they can be a tremendous "staff" when the going gets tough. They are the kind of people you want to have on your side when and if you have to go to war.

What is the starting point in terms of educating and motivating your board? The answer boils down to the people who are on it.

They must be serious workers, have good personal ethics, be involved in appropriate occupations, be successful and viewed that way in their communities and elsewhere. They must be people who will reflect their standing in the community on you and your program.

It's like a mirror image. If you pick an individual who is not highly regarded in the community and give that person a select position on your board, people in that community will not have as high a regard for your board as they otherwise would have. If you select a person who is highly regarded, then the board increases in its importance, and you and the program can reflect in the glory.

You also need proven workers. There are two schools of thought on that, and I'm not sure that one is completely right and one is all wrong. I think proven workers, people who have shown themselves to be interested in the alumni program, are going to be the best board members. They know more about it, they already have an investment in it, they have indicated an interest in it, and they have sacrificed for it. They have done all the things that you really would want a board member to do.

The key to all this is that if you don't promote your proven workers, you will undermine your entire volunteer operation. Suppose, for example, that somebody has been a class agent for a number of years and has done a fine job, or has been a club president and has worked hard. He or she has been the kind of person who has done whatever you asked, and has done it well. This person may not be chairperson of the board of a big company, may not be making a quarter of a million a year, but has nonetheless been at the core of that group that you have counted on.

When it's time for you to select a board member, someone may say, "Look at this person who is very well-to-do, powerful, and influential, even though he or she has never lifted a finger for the alumni program. Let's put this person on the board."

Unless you've got a pretty good idea that this person who has shown no previous interest, who may be on an ego trip,

will suddenly be a stellar performer on your board, you would be better off motivating somebody who already has shown the interest. That's a hard concept to sell sometimes to the nominating committee, but you have to work on it.

Motivation can mean a lot of things, and there are all kinds of situations. For instance, one of the most successful door-to-door sales pitches ever devised in terms of motivation was a quick line in which the individual says, "Sir, let me show you a little item that your neighbor said you couldn't afford." That's one of the door-to-door salesperson's little tricks. But we have a lot of other ways that we can motivate.

First of all, we've got an excellent product we can be selling and one that we can be proud of.

Specifically, informing our board members is important for education and motivation. I recommend that before a person joins the board you prepare a workbook and gather written information about your operation and the institution. You can organize it with tabs and get it to the person well before the first meeting. Let the new member have a chance at least to look through that information.

Secondly, orientation is a way of motivating people. It's a very quick way of saying, "You are important; your role here is important, and we are going to take time and work with you." That's a motivation right there.

If there are 21 members on the board, and you are bringing in a new group of seven, and spending a lot of time and talent in dealing with these newcomers, they can't help but be motivated. It's very impressive that you care that much about them.

Involve your staff in the orientation. You need to go through how the institution is organized in some fairly general terms. You need to go through how the alumni operation is organized and how it is interwoven and is serving the institution. You need to bring in the key players, people whom board members will be meeting on a regular basis.

If you are a vice president for university relations overseeing this general area, or if you report to that individual, that person should play a part in the orientation. You should introduce your staff members to board members and give them the time to talk about their functions and responsibilities. Do anything that brings people into the process. Spend the time. It is very well invested.

Develop a thorough committee system. If you are dealing with a board that doesn't have committees, you aren't working with

board members enough. Committees actually give you and the board members more to do, more chances for discussion, more chances for them to voice their opinions and offer ideas.

Every time members say, "Here is what I think," they are registering an opinion. Every time they register an opinion, they are given the chance to make a contribution. Every time they make a contribution, they are motivating themselves, and that becomes a vehicle you can use.

Avoid getting into the trap of establishing a "rubber stamp" board. Ironically, you get into a "rubber stamp" situation because you've done a good job. You are on the job longer and become better known. Two things happen. One, you want to reach out and control things a little bit more. You tend to know more about things than board members do. You don't realize it, but little by little, month by month, and then year by year, you tend to just grab off a little bit more and say, "Oh, it's easier if I take care of that."

That's problem number one. Problem number two is that board members may encourage you to do that. You go to them in good faith and say will you take care of something. The volunteers say, "Mary, my gosh, you are the pro; you know this. Go ahead and take care of it.

It makes you feel good, and your ego is boosted when they really have confidence in you. You realize that you can do a job in about half the time it would take to organize all those people to do it. So you do it, and they are grateful. But eventually somebody wakes up and finds that the board is doing virtually nothing, and you are doing almost everything. Then someone comes up with a two-foot rubber stamp and hits you with it. And then you've got another problem. So that's how by being good and successful you can actually fall into a trap that you make for yourself.

Make your meetings interesting. The social factor is important. However, if your meeting is just one continuous session of fun and games, you are not going to get things done. But the social factor, if it is handled correctly, can bring that board together so that the members begin to develop personal friendships. That is a motivating factor; members will want to come to the meetings. If those meetings are fun, if they are interesting, you will see people begin to give those higher priority in terms of their own planning.

If your meetings aren't interesting, you are going to lose out to the competition for your members' time, especially if that competition is back home and the members don't have to make a 500-mile trip and worry about the children and other things. In other words, you've got to use a little show biz and put on a production.

Move board meetings around the campus. Most board meetings are held in one spot on the campus and they don't go anywhere or do anything except what is on the agenda before them. Take the members places; get them on the inside. They love it. Everyone loves to go places, do things, hear people, and know about things that other alumni don't know.

After all, these people are the board. Why shouldn't they know? Let them go back home and three weeks later at a cocktail session say, "Well, when I was down at the campus, we did this, and so and so said . . . ."

The campus is a beautiful place to do this sort of thing. Have you ever taken your board members to the university maintenance department to learn what it takes to maintain a campus in the 1980s? That's a good one. They'll find out things that even you don't know about keeping a campus in good physical order.

Look at the residence hall situation on the campus. That's big business--feeding and housing in some cases thousands of young people. How do they do that? Build in a little time to let the housing people talk to the board members. That motivates and educates them.

Let the dean of a college tell them about his or her program. Let them meet some of the faculty.

If you can, do something at every meeting, preferably after the big lunch you feed them because otherwise they'll come back into the meeting and go to sleep.

Board members like these activities, and there is one other positive spin off. The faculty and administrators feel honored by you when you call and say, "We think your organization, your department, is so important that we would like to bring our entire alumni board over there and have you show off a little bit." They are going to think you are all right, and that isn't bad for internal relations.

Also, the alumni of the particular department or college become more important to the faculty and dean if the alumni program thinks the department is important. It's a trade-off. It's a good internal motivator.

Bring in guests to educate and motivate your members. Bring them in from a wide spectrum. Go outside your area. After all, you are dealing with the alumni board of a university, and a university involves a very broad area. This gives you a license to go beyond the things you are normally dealing with.

Make sure that you invite the college or university president to talk with the alumni board at least once a year. Bring in the new dean. Even if yours is a private school, but particularly if it is a public school, make arrangements for a prominent state legislator to come to campus and talk about legislative relations. These people have tremendous power, and you've got enough power to attract them to campus. There are alumni who know that legislator very well. If you ask the right person to ask the legislator to come to the campus, he or she will be there.

The point is that, in addition to educating and motivating your board, the more important people you bring to the board, the more important your board is perceived to be. After awhile, even if your members didn't go on the board thinking they were important, they'll end up thinking they're important. That's exactly what you want to do in educating and motivating them. You want to make them feel as important as you possibly can. The more important the speaker you obtain, the more important they are going to feel.

Tie your meetings in with special events on the campus. That's another way of educating and motivating board members. The event doesn't have to be an athletic contest. You do have theatrical events, concerts, and other activities. Let board members see some campus life while they are there.

Let them relate to the students. Alumni relate better to students than to any other constituency of higher education. They used to be students, and they never forget it. The attachment is there. You can turn on a group of alumni faster with a group of enthusiastic students than in practically any other way.

Whatever you do, get board members in touch with students. Let them sit with them, talk with them, interview them. You know your campus and your program better than anyone else, so think of a way to let them interact in some way. It will make them feel good.

When we talk about the big picture in all of this we are really talking about making a difference. Let your board members look back at their service and say, "Because I was there, this got done; this got changed. It's an improvement." That is the best motivation.

Be as flexible as you possibly can. We talk about flexibility as being important, but we don't practice it. I'm reminded of the story of the football coach who got his players together in the locker room for the first big game of the season. He said, "Now remember, men. Football is a game

that develops courage, leadership, and above all, individual initiative. Now get out there and do exactly as I tell you."

Often we talk about being flexible, working with people, and bringing them along, but then we begin to want them to do exactly as we say. That can create problems with education and motivation.

Finally, you can't motivate board members if they and their actions are not deemed important by the institution's governing officers. You volunteers and you professionals can create that sense of importance. You can talk about the alumni program, you can do all kinds of things, but if you are about to discuss something of significance within the university and someone at that point says, "Now, folks, you are overstepping your boundaries," then you have a tremendous problem with motivating your board members. What you are really saying is that the alumni board is all right only if it talks about matters dealing solely with the alumni program. But the minute it talks about anything else dealing with the university, it's overstepped its authority. That's ice water thrown in the board members' faces, and it will cool them off faster than anything else.

The board has to be able to discuss university-wide concerns. You may not want to have the board take a vote on something or lock itself into a do-or-die situation. But the board ought to be able to discuss matters and take the board's feelings to the appropriate university official. If the board can't do that, you are going to have a terrible time motivating board members.

So the big picture of the entire college or university and higher education in general becomes a key factor in educating and motivating board members.

A lot depends on how long the executive director has been in his or her position or how much that person has tried to interact with other areas of the institution. Be prepared for the fact that some of your administrative colleagues may be intimidated by what you can offer them.

They feel uneasy when you come and say, "The alumni association would like to help you place students." Their first reaction is, "All right, what am I doing wrong?" They become defensive.

I'd tell admissions officers there are all these ways that we could be helping, and they'd just look at it as more work. The fact that alumni could help make them look good somehow didn't get through. So you have to be very patient.

Once they get used to working with alumni, they enjoy it. I think the smart ones do. But you can run into resistance in a hurry, and that can cool people off.

I've seen more admissions directors in the last three years all of a sudden discover alumni than they did 10 or 15 years ago when the students were lining up at the door.

I've seen more placement officers whose programs aren't as effective as they would like them to be. So they begin to search for help.

Sooner or later, these different areas of the university are going to need your help. At that point, when they are a little bit desperate or when they are looking for something, you make your move and work with them. They'll find out that you don't bite and that you can make them look good.

DEVELOPING A SELF-EVALUATION PROGRAM FOR ALUMNI BOARD MEMBERS

Alan R. Shark
Director of Special Projects
National School Boards Association*

At the Association of Governing Boards, we developed a program for board self-development. It's designed primarily for college trustees, but with some modification you can apply it to alumni boards.

The significant aspect of this program is that it is an on-campus activity. So often in management and development courses, you can involve one or two people. That's fine, but how do you reach the other members of the board? It's hard for the participants to go back and say, "I have some exciting ideas that I want to share with you." The enthusiasm doesn't always carry over.

Having a program on campus offers an opportunity to involve all board members. One of the things we use is the concept of process consultation. I recommend a book called Process Consultation by Edgar Schein. It talks about how people get into groups, how you can be effective, the expectations they have of you, and some of the things you should be aware of when you work with them.

The second ingredient that makes this program successful is that we use a peer third-party approach. When we were developing this program, we were saying to ourselves, "Well, maybe we need to go outside and get some high-paid consultant to go in there and do the job." But we decided that might not work. When you're dealing with boards, you are dealing with some very sophisticated people, and they do not want to be told how to do things.

Training is always for somebody else. You don't need any help, but someone on your board or the staff person does.

The program is designed to help the entire board. It's designed to help the board examine its responsibilities, to help it assess its own performance. You can achieve the same thing on your own campus with a little bit of imagination and board commitment.

We use peer third-party intervention because sometimes it makes more sense to have somebody come in and serve as a

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*Shark was Director of Programs for the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges when this speech was given.

workshop or discussion leader, someone board members can identify with readily.

With the peer approach, someone walks in and says, "Hey, I'm one of you." That really works with trustees, especially in our program. The person walks into a situation and says, "Hey, I'm a trustee for this college, and I know your problems. We have similar problems." There is instant credibility and respect, and it really works.

This program is a one-time opportunity. People feel good at these sessions. They walk away saying, "We are going to change the board; we are going to do this and that." There are ways you can prolong this stimulation and keep it alive.

The mentors, the third party-people, are from various types of institutions. We thought "mentor" was probably the least threatening word. We didn't want them to be called evaluators or trainers. No one wants to be trained. He or she might consider being developed, but not trained.

Our board mentors go through a two-and-a-half-day program to introduce them to the kinds of things they can expect when they get involved with other board peers.

We have been to over 80 public and private colleges and universities in the country and have had an amazing response. We have had the program evaluated from the outside, and people really felt for the most part that it is worthwhile.

We've identified several important issues that require attention. For example, in time, boards can become complacent. They've met for many years, and there may be a sense of frustration. Also, in most instances, there is a lack of time for introspection.

Here is an opportunity to ask, "Where is the board going? How are we going to get there? What are we doing wrong? What are we doing right? What are our strengths and weaknesses?"

There is also a need for a sense of renewal. Our program went to a particular campus in the Midwest. The president said, "We are doing a fantastic job. Our budget is in the black. Our enrollment is up. Success has occurred despite the board--I'm afraid that our board needs a sense of renewal."

Another need is for an assessment of roles and responsibilities. This also could be a motivating factor, to give people an opportunity to express their own feelings. They need an opportunity to get involved in assessing what's going on, not only their responsibility as individuals, but the responsibility of the entire board. That's important. A board mem-

ber needs to ask, "How am I related to the board? How am I carrying out my responsibilities as an individual member? How am I doing the job? How is the board doing its job? How are others fulfilling their responsibilities?"

The next step is for an assessment of board organization--looking at the way in which the board is organized.

You also need increased levels of board awareness. So often you get into a rut, where routine replaces innovation.

Finally, you need increased individual commitment from board members.

How does the program help? First, there is a greater understanding of basic goals and responsibilities. That's usually one of the most important outcomes.

Second, there is better knowledge of other board members. People get to know the members and to work better with them as a result.

Third, there is improvement of the president-board relationship, and you can see how that would apply to our particular situation.

Fourth, board members develop a sense of renewal with respect to institutional goals.

Fifth, board members develop a better understanding of the institution's needs and where the board fits into the picture.

Finally, you can develop an action plan for improving board organization and performance. We do this in a workshop setting for one or two days. We try to allow enough time for people to sit down and develop some kind of an action plan and hold somebody responsible for seeing that it is carried out.

For example, if somebody feels the board should reorganize the committee structure, who is going to be in charge to see it happen? Will it be an alumni staff person? Will it be the responsibility of the alumni president, a committee? You need to build in some means of accountability. This is how we do it in our program.

The most important thing is selecting the right person to be a mentor. There are a lot of people we could have selected. We had to spend hundreds of hours agonizing over who the right person is. Our philosophy is that the answer lies with you. The mentor really is in many ways a catalyst.

In a sense the mentor counsels. He or she is not a broker. He or she is not merely a colleague; that is too passive a

category. He or she is not just an observer or reporter, not just a visitor or volunteer. That's not enough.

On the other hand, the mentor cannot be an advocate. He or she does not know your situation as well as you do. If that person is really good, he or she will sit there and let you say what you think, then turn around and ask, "What do you think your board can do better?, and how?"

We look for someone who can spur on discussion, who is a counselor, who is a discussion leader, a facilitator, an initiator, a policy analyst.

How you set up a program like this is very important. We believe that the most effective workshops begin either at lunch or the latter part of the afternoon and go on to the next day, perhaps through lunch or a little later. It can go from 9:00 to 5:00, but that is grueling.

You want to allow for informal discussion and active participation. You want your program to be a good experience. You don't want to turn people off.

In our program we have a luncheon session in which we have self-introductions. This is helpful. It really works to have people sit around a table in different positions than they normally sit at regular meetings. Break routine.

Often you find that people sit in the same rooms and in the same positions. We try to find different environments. A retreat setting is advisable, if you can arrange it. Or at least go to a meeting room that is different than the one you usually use. This is a minor point, but it really helps because it puts people in a different mind set. They suddenly realize, "Hey, this is not a regular board meeting. This <u>is</u> different."

The self-introductions get people going and get them involved, even though this procedure could take an hour. I recommend that you have people limit their remarks to one or two minutes.

Ask them to say a little bit about their background, why they chose to serve on the board. It's good for other people to hear, and it's good for that person to explain.

Another question to ask is, "What do you see as some of the institution's or board's objectives over the next five years or 10 years? Where do you see the institution going, and how does the board relate to that?

A third question is, "What expectations do you have for this workshop?" I think that's important. Get down to basics.

At the heart of our mentor workshops is a self-evaluation. The evaluation form can be administered either by mail before a meeting or at the meeting itself. The results should be analyzed at the meeting in a way that encourages plenty of participation.

We find that people are afraid of being evaluated. Nobody wants to be evaluated--certainly not the trustees, certainly not a board. But a board self-study does not measure individual performance as it does overall board performance.

The workshop is an opportunity for people to realize this is a healthy process. The major work here is "self-evaluation." No one is grading you, but you do have an opportunity to evaluate yourself and to let your feelings be known as to your perceptions of the board.

Part of this process requires certain things to occur before the workshop begins. We have put together what we call our self-study guidelines and criteria. These were designed with the help of a number of experts who really thought about the key issues that impair trustees.

Self-study is extremely important. There are two parts to the self-study. One is for the individual. It asks, "How do you feel about being a trustee and how do you feel in carrying out your responsibilities?" The other is, "How do you relate to the entire board? How do you see the board as doing its job?" This self-study gives the individual an opportunity to say, "Aha, this is the way I feel." (Following this article is a modified version of the self-study form prepared by this writer for alumni board use.)

On the other hand, it gives other people a chance to think about the issues. It also helps the mentor, who should receive this material in advance of the workshop itself.

We have someone on the staff summarize the responses so that confidentiality is assured. The mentor then has a composite telling how people feel on the various issues. That helps the mentor get a feel for the board. The mentor can then work out his or her agenda with someone on the staff and/or with the board.

We use the self-study as a main ingredient of our workshop. Then we have a coffee break, and we reconvene for more discussion on the self-study. We then have dinner and an evening session with discussion on the board's role. At the end we have what we call a general assessment to give people an opportunity to get their questions answered. Everybody has something he or she wants to say. We try to give participants many opportunities to express themselves. We ask them to consider what occupied most of the board's time and attention during the past year, what were the one or two suggestions

through the past year from which the board feels some satisfaction, and what particular shortcomings do they see in the board's organizational performance that need attention?

Finally, we encourage them to make other comments. People do use this opportunity.

The question is: Do you need an on-campus self-evaluation development program for alumni boards? Only you can answer that question. On the one hand, having the workshop is a very simple process. But it's extremely complex when you realize the many personalities you're dealing with. You've got to handle it with sensitivity.

To develop your own program, you need to consider seven things.

1. Do you have the board's complete endorsement of the program? If not, it isn't going to work. Getting the board's endorsement requires some educating. It's going to require holding some meetings. You might set up a committee to investigate how this program might benefit your board.

2. Is the board willing to complete the self-study prior to the workshop? In some cases it can work if you have the self-study at the workshop itself, as long as you have sufficient time to talk about the responses.

3. Who would be an appropriate mentor? It might work if you could find somebody from a similar type of institution. The best person might even be the alumni staff person from another college. Perhaps CASE might recommend some people who could serve in that capacity. We think it is important for you to have someone from outside your institution, a third-party person who can be a discussion leader and fit most of the qualifications we have outlined.

4. What time frame and meeting environment would be most favorable? This is an important consideration. We recommend changing the setting, if you can. If your board usually meets in one room and you want to have your workshop on campus, do it in another room. If you already sit at a board table, sit at a square table. Just rearrange things!

   If you have the resources, it's ideal to have a retreat. Wherever you hold your workshop, make the environment comfortable. Make sure there are enough breaks.

   You've got to think of the little things. If you use an outsider as mentor, he or she is going to need to know

about the board and institution. Use the campus catalog, the newspaper, board bylaws, alumni magazine, and so on.

5. What type of agenda will keep the board busy and interested? Don't have a two-day program if you don't have two days worth of business.

   In our case, we let the mentor work out the agenda with the institution. In your case, the staff person and chief volunteer can work it out with whomever you choose as mentor.

6. What are the needs and weaknesses of the board, and what plan of action is best for you to address them?

7. What evaluation and monitoring methods should you use? This is the key to what is going to happen after that mentor leaves. How are you going to carry on once that person leaves?

   We think one of the most important resources is the set of guidelines, the criteria that we've developed. You can modify those to your needs.

Q. What happens if you have a passive board and want to do something like this? Do you jump right in and try this kind of thing, or do you have some warm-up activity to get board members ready for it?

A. You have to consider what kind of commitment you're going to have for this kind of thing. There are many kinds of passive boards, and you have to determine if your board is willing to try something like this. Will your board members commit themselves to the idea and give their time? A lot of people will say, "That's great; I won't be there, but I think it is great for everybody else." If you can get these people to say, "Yes, I'm going to be there, and I'm committed," and if they agree that they are a passive board, you can say, "Let's go ahead."

Also, one of the things that makes this program work is having the self-evaluation filled out well in advance. This can give you an indication that this commitment might not be as strong as originally thought. If there is a lack of enthusiasm, that's your cue to hold off and say, "Well, I think we are not ready yet. When your people fill these things out then we will have our program."

Q. Is this a one-time operation, or is this a continuing process? Should this be for new board members, and should it be done once a year or so?

A. In our experience it is a one-time deal. Perhaps if you do it twice the newness wears off, and people say, "Well, those are the questions I answered last year."

I recommend that this be a beginning effort. I also think a modified version of this would be very helpful to new members, especially for boards that have an influx of four or five people, as opposed to just one person coming on board.

You can't ask new members a lot of questions they can't answer. You've got to consider the kinds of questions you should ask them. But it could be a nice introduction. If they see the criteria they are going to have a year from now, it will make them much more conscious of the issues they should be concerned about during the coming year.

One of the problems with making the program ongoing is logistics. Getting a mentor is hard because you are taking their time. They are volunteering--that's how it works in our program. Even if you are paying someone an honorarium, it still takes a lot of time. We don't want to see people getting too dependent on the outsider. Many of us fall into that trap. It is so easy to tell that person to tell us what we want to hear. We don't want that to happen. We feel the only way your board is going to work is for board members to find that right solution. We believe that you've got the answers.

Q. How much time would it take for us to organize such a program for an alumni board?

A. I can't cite a time factor because each board has a different mechanism. It would be a luxury for an individual to initiate the entire thing and do it in a matter of days. The problem is that you are going to have people who say, "I don't really like that agenda," or "I'm really not sure this is the right issue or that is the right issue."

It depends on how much leeway you can get. The more time you have for reactions the better off you are going to be. A main ingredient in putting this together successfully is getting the resources and then deciding for yourself which ones you want to use.

The first example is self-study. You can look at the questions and decide which ones are suitable for you. Then you should test that self-study with somebody on your committee, perhaps the chief volunteer. Once you have that okayed, and once you have the basic time frame, it gets a little easier. Then you must have somebody on your staff worry about the meeting's logistics.

It sounds simple, but it's not. You have to make sure the mentor is fully informed as to the problems of the institution and the particular board, and also knows a little bit about each person involved. The mentor should have little paragraphs about the people he or she will be dealing with. Those are the kinds of things that are involved.

Of course, getting everybody to agree to one date is hard. Also, someone is going to have to summarize the results of the self-study.

Q. I'm not comfortable yet with the roles of the mentor and your professional staff person. How do they relate to each other? Does the staff member take a passive role in determining board members to be evaluated or does he or she interject a lot of information?

A. My feeling is that the mentor should be a workshop leader and should be billed as such. That's why it is so important to get this straight at the very beginning of the meeting. The mentor is going to say, "Hey, I'm not an expert, and I'm here to work with you. You people are the experts; I'm not."

You've got to find someone who is a good listener, who is going to understand that role, and who can deal a lot with the alumni professional and with the chief volunteer.

We require that. In other words, when the person you've chosen walks in, he or she should have met with you at least three or four times by phone and at least once in person.

Q. Why do you need a third-party person?

A. You can certainly do this on your own. I have seen it work. But you are putting a particular member in a very uncomfortable and difficult situation. There is a lot of sensitive material involved, such as, "How do you get along with your committee chairperson?"

It is easier for someone from another institution or another organization to come in and serve as a mentor. It's politically advantageous to have that person take the heat. The mentor is also looked upon as a neutral person with no axe to grind. A third-party person can walk in and say things that you want to say. The mentor can say it better because he or she is neutral.

Q. What should be the staff participation in the meeting itself?

A. We look upon this program as being primarily for the trustees, or in your case, primarily for the alumni board.

Many of the things you'd be dealing with have to do with policy. We insist that at least the top staff person be there because part of this effort is designed to improve your relationship.

We want to build an environment that is honest and conducive to open discussion. That is the most important ingredient.

There's an alternative. You can provide opportunities for staff members to be involved at certain points along the way in the meetings. They might be there for the opening session. But when the board members break down into small groups, that's the time for you to ask staff members to leave.

Association of Governing Boards
of Universities and Colleges

NAME _____

ALUMNI BOARD EVALUATION

Background

	YES	NO	SOMEWHAT OR SOMETIMES
1. Do you feel you have adequate opportunity to understand your obligations, responsibilities and opportunities for growth as a member of the Alumni Board?	___	___	___
2. Have you a clear grasp of your board's responsibilities?	___	___	___

3. If you have answered yes to either or both questions, what has been the primary source(s) of your information? (e.g., an orientation program, a particular individual, a book, prior service as a board member.)

_____

_____

_____

4. Are you familiar with your institution's stated mission, institutional plan and current policies?	___	___	___
5. Have you recently taken an opportunity to meet with Board members, trustees, and educators from other institutions?	___	___	___
6. Do you have adequate opportunities to know your fellow Board members?	___	___	___

7. What do you feel are your strongest areas of expertise and interest based on your background and experience (x):

___Budget/Finance	___Fund Raising
___Careers	___Public Relations
___Management	___Marketing
___Long Range Planning	___Publications
___Legal Affairs	___Local organizations
___Admissions	___Awards, Nominations
___Student Affairs	___Cultural Events
___Faculty Affairs	___Other:_____

Knowledge of the Institution

8. Are you familiar with your institution's recent history and what makes it distinctive from neighboring colleges and universities?	___	___	___

9. Cite three of its special strengths:

a)_____

b)_____

c)_____

	YES	NO	SOMEWHAT OR SOMETIMES
10. And its three greatest needs:			
a)_____			
b)_____			
c)_____			
11. Do you feel well informed about the type and quality of your institution's educational programs?	___	___	___
12. Have you attended a campus event within the past year?	___	___	___
13. Have you attended an alumni event in your local area in the last year?	___	___	___
14. Do you regularly read the campus newspaper or faculty or student organization minutes?	___	___	___
15. Do you know the names of your institution's:			
a) Key administrators?	___	___	___
b) Faculty leaders?	___	___	___
c) Student leaders?	___	___	___
16. Have you met some of them apart from board meetings?	___	___	___
17. Are you acquainted with the physical plan and maintenance needs of your institution?	___	___	___
18. Are you satisfied with your attendance at board and committee meetings?	___	___	___
19. Do you read the minutes of meetings to determine whether they faithfully represent the proceedings and decisions as you recall them?	___	___	___
20. Do you prepare for board meetings by reading agendas and supporting materials?	___	___	___
21. Do you sometimes suggest agenda items?	___	___	___
22. Do you help board and committee meetings to steer clear of nonpolicy matters better left to the administration?	___	___	___
23. Do you contribute a gift to your institution according to your means for: a) annual operations?	___	___	___
b) capital campaigns?	___	___	___
24. Have you ever suggested to the board's nominating committee or to the appointing authority someone who would make an outstanding new board member?	___	___	___

	YES	NO
25. If you have not already done so, would you be willing to serve as a committee chairman or board officer? Why (or why not)?_____	___	___
26. Have you found your board membership to be stimulating and rewarding thus far? Why (or why not)? _____	___	___

27. How would you rate yourself as a board member at this time?
Above Average___ Average___ Below Average___

Board Membership

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW OR CAN'T JUDGE
1. Do you feel that the board now contains a sufficient range of expertise, attitudes, and external relationships to make it an effective board?	___	___	___
2. Does the board have a committee that assesses its needs in the way of qualifications of new members, and that maintains a roster of prospective members?	___	___	___
3. Does the board have a committee that reviews the performance of its individual members?	___	___	___
4. Does the board have an established procedure for orienting new members to their institution and to their duties and responsibilities?	___	___	___
5. Do you feel that the board should alter its policies and practices with respect to:			
a. size of the board?	___	___	___
b. length of term?	___	___	___
c. number of successive terms?	___	___	___
d. age limit or honorary retirement?	___	___	___
e. age composition?	___	___	___
f. sex composition?	___	___	___
g. minority composition?	___	___	___
h. geographical composition?	___	___	___
i. persons with educational experience?	___	___	___
j. persons with financial management experience?	___	___	___
k. requiring a minimum attendance record?	___	___	___

Summary: In relation to this criterion, I feel that the board's overall performance has been:

Very Good___ Good____ Barely Adequate____ Poor____

Don't Know or Cannot Judge ___

Further comments or suggestions related to this criterion:

Board Organization	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW OR CAN'T JUDGE
1. Within the past two or three years, has the board in some formal way reviewed its organization, committee practices, and bylaws?	___	___	___
2. Do meeting agendas:			
a. put before you issues of policy the board should consider?	___	___	___
b. include appropriate supporting information in the right amount?	___	___	___
c. reach you sufficiently in advance of the meeting?	___	___	___
3. Do you believe that the number and duration of board meetings are sufficient to properly take care of the association's business?	___	___	___
4. Are board meetings effectively conducted and reasonably stimulating?	___	___	___
5. Do you feel that the present committee structure:			
a. efficiently handles the board's work?	___	___	___
b. gives the full board the opportunity to consider all matters of key importance?	___	___	___
c. allows constituencies to be heard before recommendations are formed?	___	___	___
6. Do board policies governing board and committee membership afford sufficient opportunity for rotating leadership?	___	___	___

Summary: In relation to this criterion, I feel that the board's overall performance has been:

Very Good _____ Good ___ Barely Adequate _____ Poor_____

Don't Know or Cannot Judge ____

Further comments or suggestions related to this criterion:

Board/Alumni Office Relations

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW OR CAN'T JUDGE
1. Is there a climate of mutual trust and support between the board and the alumni office?	___	___	___
2. Have the board or some of its members counseled with the director of alumni affairs to provide guidelines or strengthen certain areas of performance?	___	___	___
3. Do you feel that the board has delegated to the director the authority he or she needs to administer the program successfully?	___	___	___
4. Is there a written statement of role and responsibility for the director which clearly defines his or her functions and the board's expectations?	___	___	___
5. Should the board or a board committee formally assess the director's performance in some systematic way from time to time?	___	___	___

Summary: In relation to this criterion, I feel that the board's overall performance has been:

Very Good____ Good____ Barely Adequate____ Poor_____

Don't Know or Can't Judge____

Further comments or suggestions related to this criterion:

Other

1. What do you see as the role of the alumni board?

2. What have been the successes and failures of the board?

3. How would you change the workings of the board?

   Time allotted to various areas:

   What we do at the three meetings:

4. Are there areas of special interest to you that are not now being covered?

GENERAL ASSESSMENT

1. What issues have most occupied the board's time and attention during the past year?

2. What were the one or two successes during the past year for which the board feels some satisfaction?

3. What particular shortcomings do you see in the board's organization or performance that need attention?

4. Other comments or suggestions?

SAMPLE ONE-DAY TRUSTEE WORKSHOP

OBJECTIVES

--TO EXPLORE THE BOARD'S ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

--TO IDENTIFY POSSIBLE AREAS FOR ITS IMPROVEMENT IN ITS ORGANIZATION AND PERFORMANCE

--TO DEVELOP AN ENVIRONMENT FOR GREATER BOARD COMMITMENT AND RENEWAL

9:30-11:00 A.M.		OPENING SESSIONS
		SELF-INTRODUCTIONS/SETTING THE STAGE
		--A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND AND WHY YOU CHOOSE TO SERVE ON THE BOARD.
		--WHAT DO YOU SEE AS SOME OF THE INSTITUTION'S (OR BOARD'S) KEY OBJECTIVES OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?
		--WHAT EXPECTATIONS DO YOU HAVE FOR THIS WORKSHOP?
11:00 A.M.		COFFEE AND TEA BREAK
11:10 A.M.-12:30 P.M.		REVIEW OF RESPONSES TO SELF-STUDY CRITERIA
12:30 P.M.		LUNCHEON SPEAKER -- INSTITUTIONAL PRESIDENT
	(OR)	PANEL -- ALUMNI PRESIDENT/VOLUNTEER/BOARD CHAIRMAN
1:45-3:00 P.M.		REVIEW OF RESPONSES TO SELF-STUDY CRITERIA (CONT.)
3:00-3:15 P.M.		BREAK
3:15-4:15 P.M.		GROUP DISCUSSIONS
		GROUP 1 -- "WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS TO BE TAKEN GROUP 2 -- TO IMPROVE BOARD PERFORMANCE"
4:15-5:30 P.M.		CLOSING SESSION
		--REPORT OF GROUP 1 and 2 LEADERS
		--GENERAL DISCUSSION TO DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE ACTION PLAN

RECOGNIZING AND REWARDING YOUR BOARD

Douglas Wilson
Executive Director
University of Oregon Foundation

Giving proper recognition to your alumni board members helps to show them you appreciate their work. Go the extra mile. Pull together all of the information you have on these candidates.

As standard procedure, you should have a picture of every board member in your files. When you name a new board member, make sure the PR department sends a story and picture to the person's newspaper. Let the public information staff work for you a little bit.

The alumni board is probably the most important aspect of the entire alumni program. Yet many institutions do not even announce board members in their own magazines. If you aren't, why not?

I suggest that you list the board members in your publications, in your newspaper or magazine that goes to alumni. It's a small way of recognizing their participation, and it constantly reinforces in people's minds the idea that there is a board. You should also list the board members' home towns so you can show the geographic representation of the board.

Listing the board members' terms of service is also useful. One reason for doing this is that it's a subtle but important way of reminding board members that their terms of service will end at some point. It helps to move them on so that you can bring new people on the board.

Many institutions list the alumni board members on their stationery. There are pros and cons to this practice. I think it's a good idea. It's a little expensive, and you have to get new stationery every year as your board changes. I hope you are writing so many letters and communicating so much that you have to order more stationery anyway.

You can also recognize board members through your meetings and other events. We put a lot of time, energy, and concern into these meetings. Board members tend to judge your performance by how well things are organized for the meetings. But chances are you are keeping your board meetings a closely guarded campus secret. Why not involve some other people so that you get a story in the student newspaper and administration or faculty-staff publication. Then there will be recognition among the faculty, staff, and students that

the alumni board is on campus this weekend to discuss certain issues.

If you don't think there is enough of a story there, it tells you something about the upcoming meeting, doesn't it? Look at it from that perspective. If you cooperate with your director of public information to create a story in advance of the meeting, the first thing that individual would ask is, "What are you going to talk about and what are you going to do?" If you begin to plan your meeting so that you can come up with an exciting story, you will have an exciting meeting. It has a nice spin-off effect.

In addition, in too many cases we are not publicizing in our alumni publications the fact that we had a meeting, and that this group represents thousands of alumni. They are the representatives of the alumni. What did they do at the meeting? Get some pictures of these meetings and get them into your alumni publication. This doesn't mean you have to publicize every meeting; you can overdo it. But at least once a year try to have a story and an action photo of the board in session, touring a facility, listening to an important speaker, and so on. You can get a lot of mileage out of one picture and a little story.

You should also make certain that board members meet with as many university officials as they possibly can in the course of their terms. When people go off your board, ask yourself how many university officials they met during their terms. If they haven't met a number of key people, not just in a social way, then you are not developing enough relationships between the board and other key officials on campus. That's a good way to educate them and motivate them. In addition, board members consider getting to know these officials as a reward for their service.

Always introduce board members at any official function held in the name of the university, particularly in the name of the alumni association or the alumni program. You can go too far with this. There are some situations in which it may not be appropriate, but you should think about it. If there is an alumni club meeting and you spot three past or present members of your board in attendance, tell the program's master of ceremonies to introduce these people. If there is a present or a past member of the board at any campus event, go out of your way to introduce that individual.

Many times we take our board members for granted. Giving them recognition often doesn't cost you anything. Again, try to give recognition on a reasonable budget.

Get the alumni board meetings on campus calendars. Chances are there is an all-university or all-college calendar on

your campus. When your board or board committees meet, make sure the calendar coordinator gets those meetings on the calendar. Again, this is just good public information.

Let other people know your alumni board members are working. We tend not to do that, and then we wonder why the rest of the campus doesn't understand how we function.

Another important time for board member recognition is retirement time. Particularly if you have had worthwhile sessions, a lot of members may not want to retire. You can soften the blow and also say thanks with appropriate recognition.

You should give retiring members some kind of special citation. I don't like plaques. I think they are great for some things, but I don't like them for this purpose because they are cold and not very "human." That's just a personal view. I prefer a limited edition, high-quality certificate with embossing, anything that's signed by a human being or two. People are more likely to use a nicely framed certificate than a plaque that was stamped out of a factory somewhere.

Have the president of the institution sign the certificate. It's a nice way of thanking the retiring member. It brings the process full cycle. The president wrote this person a few years ago to congratulate him or her on joining the board. Then, at retirement time, the president signs the certificate to show the institution's appreciation. It's a good way to get the president's involvement. And the costs will be reasonable.

When members go off the board, find a way to tie their retirement in with a major campus event, particularly an alumni event, whether it is homecoming, alumni day, or spring reunions. If you recognize their service at a meeting with a limited number of people in the room, those people will applaud politely, and that's the end of it. Think how much better it would be if that recognition occurs at the big alumni dinner.

If you give retiring members that kind of recognition, it can't help but stress how important you think board members are. It's a nice way of reinforcing the participation of current members. But if the recognition is done hastily and impersonally, board members will get the idea their service doesn't make much difference.

Also, every time you make a big deal out of a board member's retirement, it helps you a year or two later to recruit good, new board members. Board service becomes a status symbol. People see the publicity the board gets. So when you go ask

busy people to serve--people who get things done--, you will find that they will say yes more often because of the proper motivation you have given them, without their knowing it.

Don't forget your retired board members. Get them on other councils within the university. Continue to send them materials. Bring them back for events from time to time. On occasion invite all former board members back for a special reception in their honor. They like to see each other again. The idea is to continue communicating with them and reinforcing their importance.

In real estate, it is said the three most important things are location, location, and location. In our business the three most important things are thank you, thank you, and thank you--say it in every way you can. We get rushed, there are phone calls building up, and a lot of other things demand our time and attention. Too often they detract from our ability to say thanks to our very best friends.

When board members step down, when you have recognized their service, wait about two or three weeks and write each one a personal note again saying thanks.